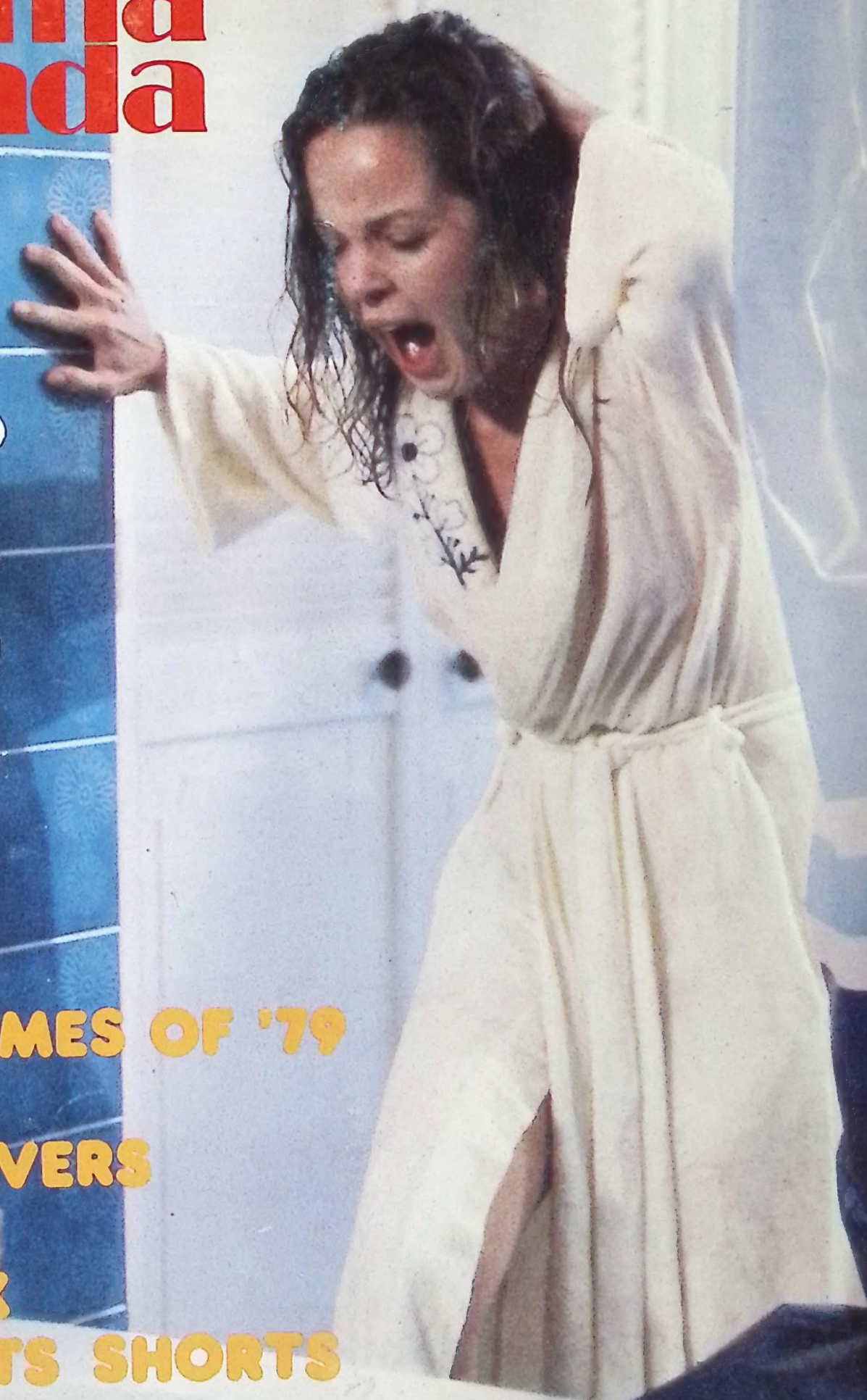


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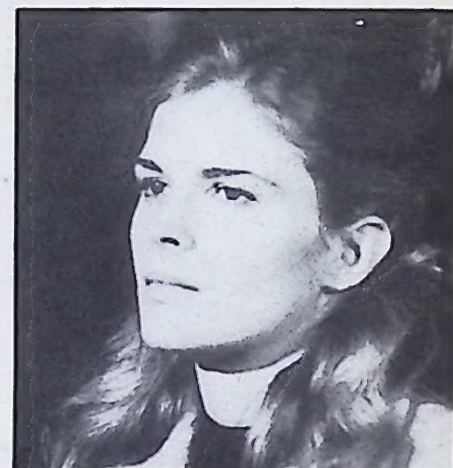
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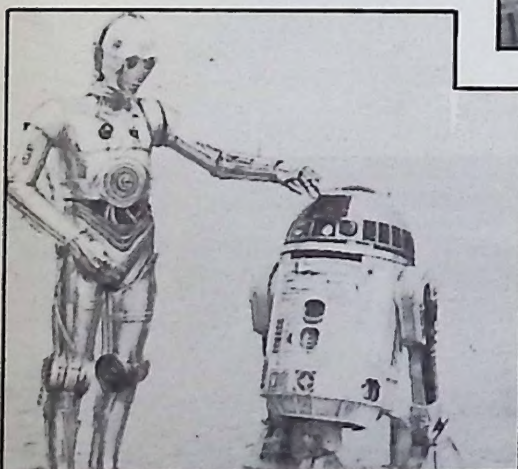
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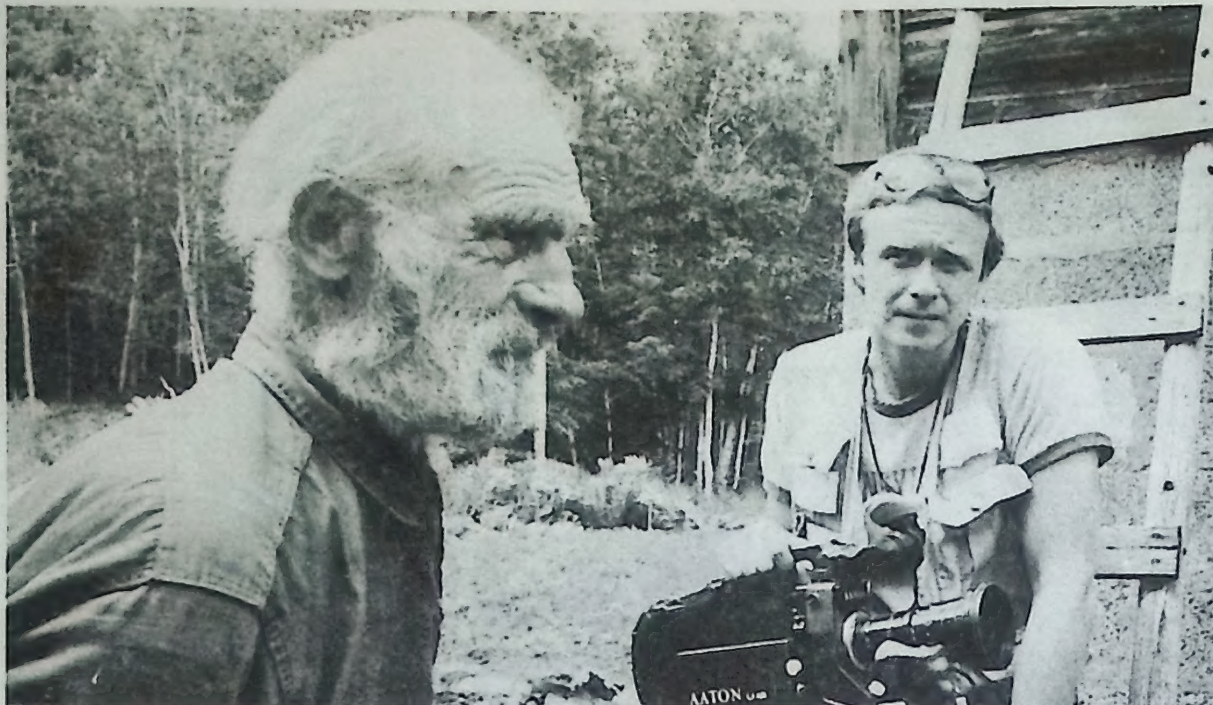
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Cover :

Melissa Sue Anderson has come a long way from her little house on the prairie ; and centre-stage is a terrifying place to be in Dal Production's new horror flick **Happy Birthday to Me**. See page 6 for details.

Photo : Piroska Mihalka

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REVERB

bible recommended

Mother Tongue — a rave review.

"May seems to be avoiding it." K. Dolgy — Cinema Canada, No. 66.

Dolgy is absolutely right — I am.

What I am avoiding is any definition of her 'truth.' What she finds inadequate is the film's failure to meet the categorical standards of the 'genre' and the filmmaker who "is not determined, above all else, to inform."

Dolgy is absolutely right — again.

Her definition of the aim of the "traditions of the documentary" is heady stuff — it is also tight-assed and humourless.

For someone so suspicious of "poetics" and with a talent for reducing lies and truths into lifeless points of order, she (Dolgy) should clean up her method of quotation and her powers of observation.

She falsely attributes quotes to me (we have never met) and misquotes Patricia Nolin "from the film." She refers to a "multitude of settings" in which Patricia Nolin (my wife) is seen: there are in fact about six separate locations and even fewer changes of 'costumes'.

The "material, foreign to the time and place of the situation portrayed" is in fact imagery chosen for its historical accuracy and emotional relevance.

Her distortion of that which is simply observable is perfectly illustrated by her reference to "stock studio footage" of "an actor doing a stunt." It is, in fact, archival footage of a market porter carrying many baskets on his head. My father was (in fact) a market porter. And so on and so on...

The editors of Cinema Canada should unleash Dolgy's appetite for the truth on something more substantial. How about the Bible?

Derek May

Director, *Mother Tongue*

Katherine Dolgy wrote the following response to Derek May's letter above.

Mr. May:

Your anger at a fair review has caused you to lose your memory. The first quotation was taken down in front of you at the Toronto *Mother Tongue* press conference, where we met. The second is a direct quotation from the film taken down during the press screening. The other three are word-for-word from your NFB press release.

There is of course no such thing as "my" truth. Your responsibility as a film-

maker is your business, my responsibility as writer and critic is to respond from insight, with honesty.

Mr. May, you seem to be accustomed to the sort of critic who does your P.R. for you. The point is: being Canadian doesn't guarantee a favourable review — the film has to be good (remember the film?).

Katherine Dolgy

Reviewer of *Mother Tongue*

it took team work

I wish to thank you for the article you have published in the August issue entitled "Larger than Life," concerning our series of animated films *The Secret Railroad/Les voyages de Tortillard*. It was most gratifying to read such an enthusiastic reaction to the years of effort that have gone into this production.

While I realize that your article was concerned with the production of the film, I feel that more emphasis could have been given to the artistic side of the production without which, of course, no film of this quality would have been thinkable.

In this respect the role of Peter Sander, the creator and director of the film, and of Danielle Marleau, as co-author and designer was decisive and all important. The idea for this series of films was conceived and developed by Peter Sander and the various delightful episodes were co-authored by Danielle Marleau.

The extraordinary teamwork and professional approach which every member of our team displayed over the past three years is what made those films possible. So of course I would have been most pleased if you had identified our music composer, Hagood Hardy, our editor Michel Guay, and our animator Chesney Long.

I was delighted to have the opportunity to produce and be part of that team.

Louise Ranger
Producer

Do You Know The Whole Story?

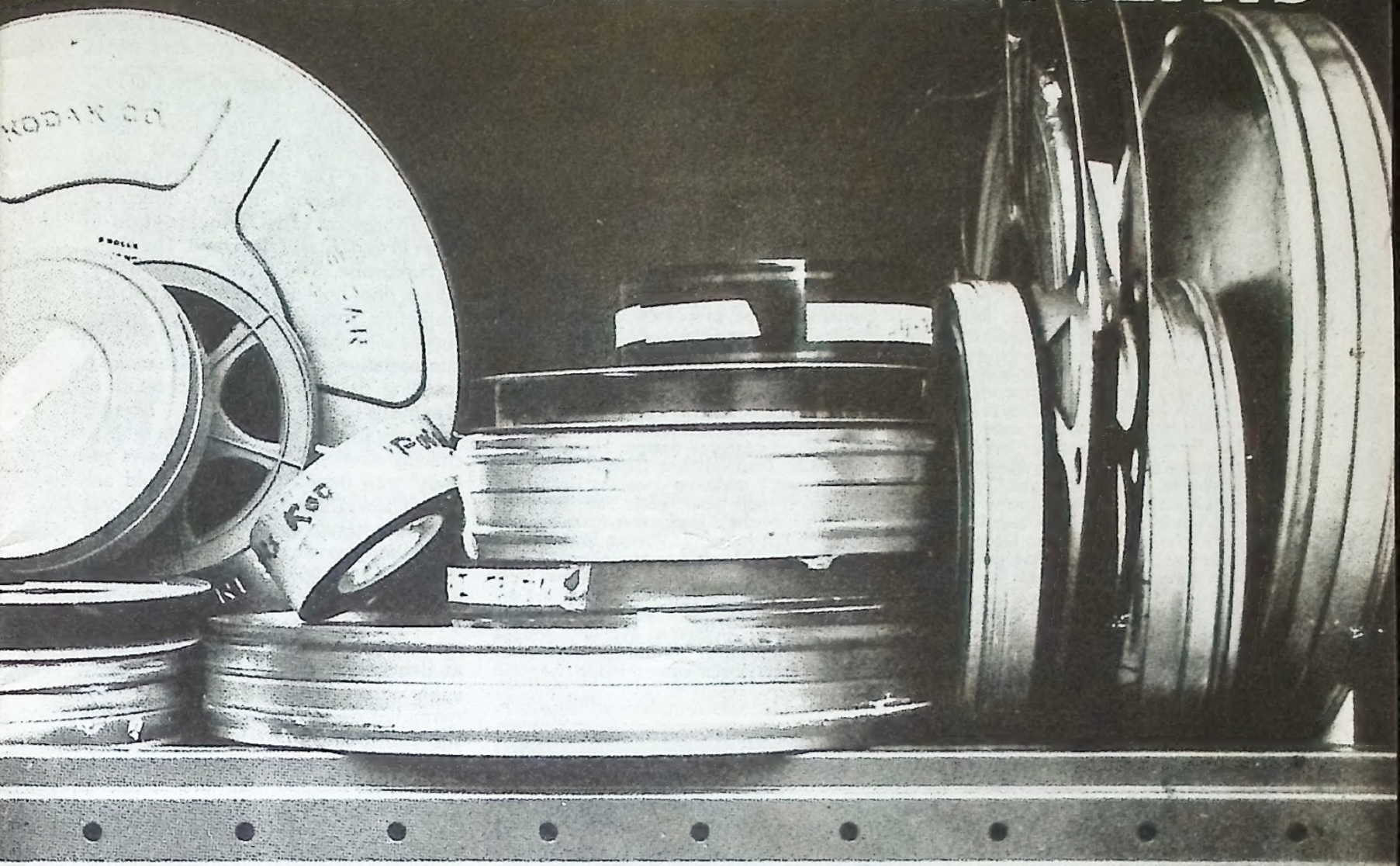
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IN PROGRESS...

Happy Birthday To Me

p.c. The Birthday Film Co. Inc. p. John Dunning, André Link line p. Stewart Harding assist. to Dunning Irene Litinsky assist. to Harding Marilyn Majerczyk p. man. Carole Legault p. sec. Carole Laflamme unit. man. Ginette Hardy loc. man. Cary Ross p. account. Lucie Drolet office p.a./driver Stuart Woolley d. J. Lee Thompson assist. d. Charles Braive (1st), François Ouimet (2nd), Robbie Ditchburn (3rd) cont. superv. Monique Champagne casting Dani Hausmann, Francine Brasseur (assist.) d.o.p. Miklos Lente focus puller David Douglas assist. cam. Mathieu Décary (2nd), Claude Simon Langlois (3rd) key grip Johnny Daoust grips Emmanuel Lepine, Pierre Charpentier gaf. Don Saarl best boy Chuck Hughes 3rd elec. John Lewin sd. mix. Richard Lightstone boom Jim Thompson art d./special set ups Earl Preston assist. art d. Michel Denuet (1st), Claude Benoit (2nd) spec. efx. co-ord. Gary Zeller, Jacques Godbout (assist.), Ernie

Tomlinson (assist.) prop. vehicle co-ord. David Phillips set props Charles Bernier, Ryal Cosgrove (assist.) props buyer Katherine Wadas dresser Denys Proulx, Armand Thomas (assist.) p.a./props Jim Hodgson p.a./art dept. Mark Montebello, Réal Paré ed. Michael & Debbie Karen stunts Rémi Julienne (co-ord.), Max Kleven costume design. Huguette Gagné ward. Marie-Hélène Gascon, Elizabeth Lamy (assist.) make-up Jocelyne Bellemare, Stephan Dupuis (spec. efx.), Tom Schwartz (spec. efx.), Michèle Burke (assist., spec. efx.) hair Bob Pritchett stills Piroška Mihalka unit pub. Elizabeth Morris, Ann McRoberts + associates p.a. Jacques LeFlaguais, Gregory Dunning driver captain Neil Allan Bibby driver/p.a. Christopher Gilmore, Marc Hébert driver/Melissa Sue Anderson Michael Borlace driver/Glenn Ford Edward Sanden craft service Gisèle Bolduc caterer Byron Ayanoglu

With **Happy Birthday to Me**, Dal Productions hopes to cut its share of horror genre box office pie. Its press release notes "currently raking in box office receipts are **The Shining**, **Friday the 13th**, and **The Fog**." Veteran director J. Lee Thompson (**The Reincarnation of Peter Proud**, **Eye of the Devil**, **The Guns of Navarone**, **The Greek Tycoon** and others) does not consider himself part of a marketing formula; he's more preoccupied with characterization and a visual interpretation of the script, than with equaling or surpassing the receipts of **Meatballs** (a past Dal success). "There is no formula for translating 'there is a chilling moment when X discovers the body' into filmed images. I would ask myself how Hitchcock would have shot it, but that's hardly employing a formula."

Birthday revolves around a series of bizarre and untimely "disappearances" amongst the "top 10" most outgoing and popular students of a New England university town. The film will try to leave audiences in the dark until the theatre lights go on. No one from the press is permitted on set for fear a reporter will see and record something which could spoil the surprise for theatre audiences. In fact, after roughly half the shooting, neither cast nor crew are aware of the identity of the killer, not even the killer him/herself. (This "In Progress" report was pieced together from off-set discussions with Michel René Labelle — one of the two Montreal actors in the "top 10" — and director J. Lee Thompson.)

Thompson says **Birthday** ought to resemble a film like **Psycho**, more than, say, **Friday the 13th** or **Alien**, in the sense that the horror or scariness of **Birthday** will derive from the audience's involvement in complex and sometimes perverse relationships. This said, a sizeable percentage of **Birthday's** \$3.5 million budget will be spent on special effects, in order to ensure the film's competitiveness with the mini-blockbusters cited in the public relations release.

Thompson's past involvement with Hitchcock (he worked as "dialogue director" on **Blackmail**, **The Lady Vanishes** and many other of Hitchcock's early British works) shows on set. Camera operator David Douglas says that every shot is planned in advance; there is no

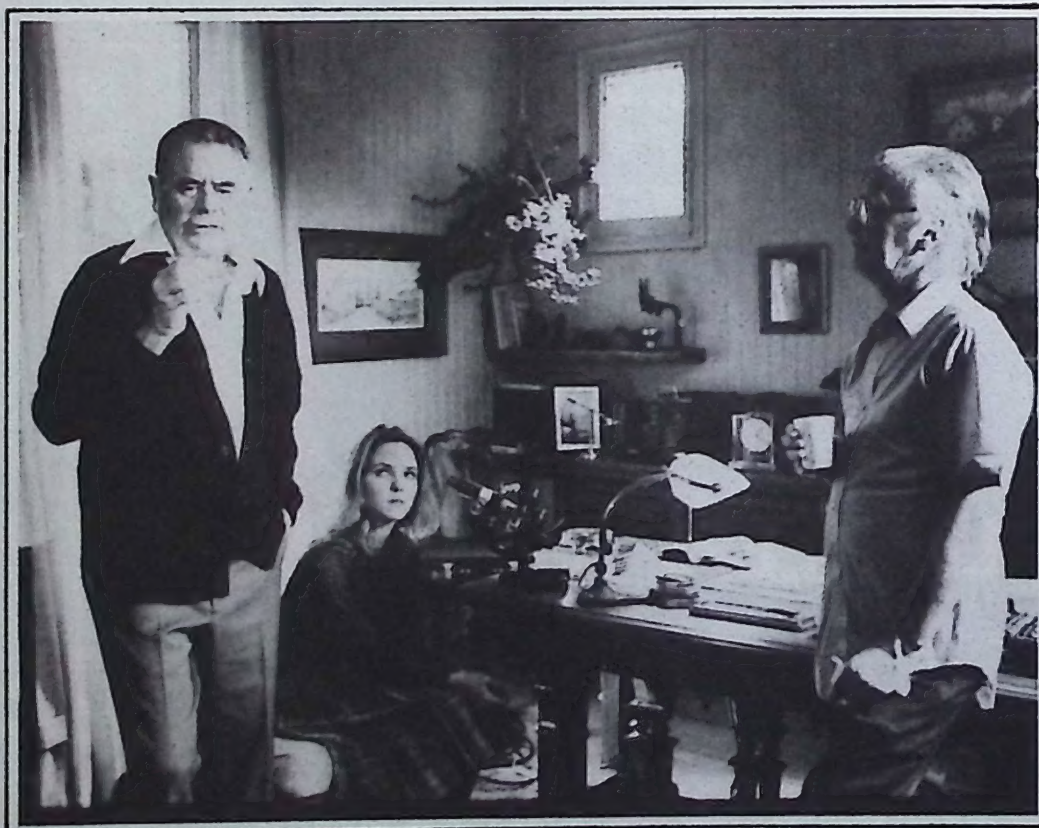


photo: Piroška Mihalka

This **Birthday's** more than just a piece of cake! Here, Glenn Ford, Melissa Sue Anderson and director J. Lee Thompson

need for a master shot (a shot which covers all the action from a single position) because the editing of the film is almost pre-visualized.

Michel René Labelle (playing a Parisian student studying in New England) is likewise impressed by Thompson's on-set style. "He knows what he wants from the actors and, very often, he will go through the action himself. Consequently, I feel secure working with him." Michel René played Louis in Gilles Carle's *Fantastica* (scheduled for Canadian release in September). "Thompson's style is different from Carle's. Carle was more prone to construct his film around his actors' on-set personalities, while Thompson will work with you until your actions fit a preconceived notion."

This is not to say that there is no spontaneity on the set. According to

Michel René, Thompson decided to improvise whenever the dialogue sounded forced, sometimes doing two takes — the first scripted, the second completely improvised.

A large portion of the shooting is taking place at the Loyola campus of Concordia University, and McGill, while the stage sets are being filmed in a curling club Dal has refurbished as a studio. *Birthday* is being produced with the participation of the Canadian Film Development Corporation and Famous Players. The private placement of the film is being handled by Filmco Limited, a Winnipeg-based company. Theatrical release is scheduled for early 1981. We'll have to wait until then to see how successfully Thompson blends his brand of "characterization" with Dal's brand of marketing and shock effects.

Howard Goldberg

Melanie

p.c. Melanie Productions Inc. p. Simcom Ltd. : Peter Simpson exec. p. Richard Simpson d. Rex Bromfield sc. Robert Guza Jr. & Richard Paluck ph. Richard Ciupka p. design. Roy Forge Smith p. man. Gerry Arbeid sd. mix. Douglas Ganton ed. Brian Ravok 1st a.d. Ken Goch loc. man. Brian Ross pub. Pat Whittingham l.p. Glynnis O'Connor, Paul Sorvino, Burton Cummings, Trudy Young, Layne Coleman, Jamie Dick

an illiterate woman from the Ozarks (O'Connor) who sets out to find her young son and wayward husband in that mecca of the uprooted, Los Angeles. The vagaries of her quest lead her to the doorstep and bedroom of a down-on-his-luck rock musician (Cummings). By film's end, love and gold records bloom on the horizon as Melanie is reunited with her son, and the rock musician with success.

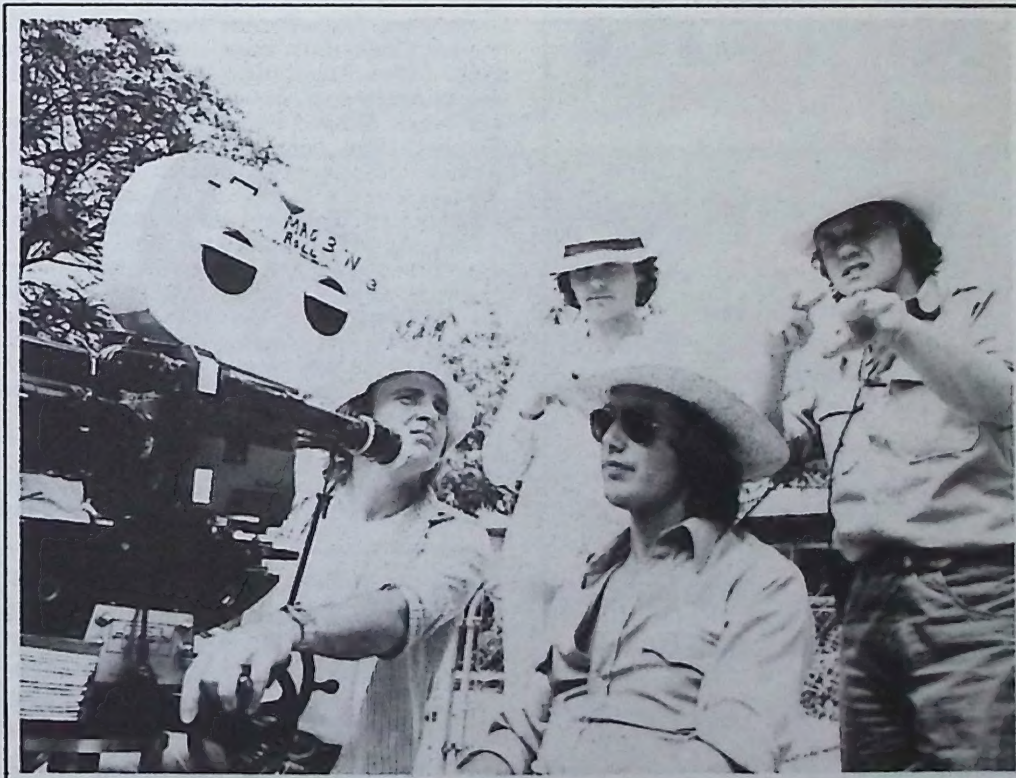
Time: 8 p.m., Tuesday, July 22, 1980
Place: Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles

"Hey, good-looking, buy me a bed?"
"Watcha got in your pants, beautiful?"
"Get me a drink at Carlos and Charlie's?"
"You have an Export A, eh?"

What's this, hiding in a parking lot off the Strip? A Canadian what? Film? What are you guys doing down here, eh? Exteriors? You mean, you want exteriors of Los Angeles for a Canadian film... Look, I know there are a lot of us Canucks down here, but L.A. still doesn't qualify as a Canadian location. Oh, the *whole* story is set in Los Angeles... and the Ozarks, too?... You sure this is a Canadian film?

Well, yes. At a time when film and television production south of the border was brought to a standstill by the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) strike, *Melanie*, produced by Toronto-based Simcom Ltd., was busy lensing just down the street from SAG headquarters on Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles. The production was in town for a three-week stint after four weeks of shooting in Toronto.

Starring Glynnis O'Connor and Burton Cummings, *Melanie* relates the story of



Cats in their hats! Here, director Rex Bromfield (left rear), d.o.p. Richard Ciupka (right rear), camera operator Fred Guthe (far left), and focus-puller Andy Chmura (centre) on location with *Melanie*



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photo: Peter Riches

Ignoring the fact that illiteracy has never been a barrier to success in Hollywood, the story trades on Melanie's disorientation in the big city and her struggle for literacy, ergo dignity.

Third-time director Rex Bromfield (*Love at First Sight*, *Tulips*) shot most of the film's interiors in Toronto in June, with a section of the Toronto Zoo substituting for the Ozark Mountains (complete with a shack uprooted from the backwoods of Ontario), and a Toronto-area mansion filling in for Cummings' Beverly Hills hideaway. Then it was on to L.A. where Simcom's subsidiary, Simcom International, has its headquarters. Canadian production heads and seconds were supplemented by a non-union American film crew, the majority of Canadians not being members of any American-based union.

On this particular Tuesday night, aside from dodging SAG vigilantes, the production also had to cope with an eclectic mob of extras, keeping them happy with rich infusions of bagels and cream cheese. The extras, an assortment of blue-haired punks, fag-hags and roller skaters, were to form the backdrop for Melanie's first brush with L.A.'s street scene. The only problem was that the affected weirdness of the extras could hardly compete with

the reality of Sunset Strip. But, compared to sedate Toronto...

With the extras and the bagels keeping low in a parking lot, Bromfield and director of photography (d.o.p.) Richard Ciupka had their hands full setting up the shot of Melanie's arrival in L.A. Looking like college kids inebriated by the Strip's smash-flash, the two crisscrossed the street trying to resolve a lens and lighting problem. The L.A. County Sheriff finally nipped their problem in the bud by booting the production off the street until midnight. A foul-up either by the production or the City Permits department struck the set.

Undaunted, the crew set up anew in the parking lot of Tower Records a few blocks away. The scene: Melanie, asking for directions, is nearly picked up by a stereotyped black pimp at the wheels of an uncharacteristic limousine. The scene behind the camera, though, had more local flavour as Tower customers and crew trucks vied for parking spaces, and an onslaught of passers-by pestered anyone with a clipboard for a bit part. L.A. being a city of extras, the crew demons-

trated unusual patience and uncharitable sarcasm as every John Doe unloaded his burden of missed casting calls. Amidst this gnawing of teeth arrived Glynnis O'Connor, looking every inch the transplanted country bumpkin. The scene was shot quickly, and then everyone trekked back to the parking lot to await the midnight hour and the final scene of the night.

Other scenes shot in L.A. included a live concert featuring Cummings, and interiors left over from the Toronto shoot. Even the Ontario backwoods shack ended up on the West Coast — no doubt traveling further than its occupants ever did. Shooting ended on schedule on July 28, sending everyone back north dreaming of margaritas and bagels. The word from the screening room so far indicates that the rushes are what everyone hoped for. The film is due to be released early next year, complete with that West Coast marketing stroke of genius, the tie-in album featuring original songs by Burton Cummings.

René Balcer

Gas

Film Arts Film Arts

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p.c. Filmpian International exec. p. Pierre David, Victor Solnicki p. Claude Héroux d. Les Rose sc. Richard Wolf original story Richard Wolf and Susan Scranton p. man. Roger Héroux d.o.p. René Verzier art. d. Carol Spier, Rose Marie McSherry (1st assist.) a.d. John Fretz (1st), Patrick Ferraro (2nd) ed. Patrick Dodd unit. man. Jean Savard (1st unit), James Arnett (2nd unit) stunt co-ord. James Arnett cost. design. Gaudeline Sauriol set dress. Ronald Fauteux, Patrice Bengle, Serge Bureau cont. France Boudreau sd. Patrick Rousseau prop. master Jean Bourret dresser Luc Le Fla Guais make-up Louise Rundel hair Constant Natale assist. cam. Jean-Jacques Gervais elec. Richer Francoeur, Jean-François Pouliot boom Thierry Hoffman construc. superv. Claude Simard spec. effects co-ord. Gary Zeller loc. man. Guy Trinqué stills Pierre Dury, Denis Fugère casting d. Ginette d'Amico p. co-ord. Danielle Rohrbach gaf. Kevin O'Connell key grip François Dupère transp. captain Charles Toupin l.p. Sterling Hayden, Susan Anspach, Helen Shaver, Keith Knight, Donald Sutherland, Peter Aykroyd, Howie Mandel, Sandee Currie, Mike Hogan, Paul Kelman pub. Pierre Brousseau, Kay Gray

The production has used over 40 stunt vehicles, jumped a car over a moving train, and blown up a gas station. But today it's unexpectedly calm at the Canadian National Diesel Yards in Point St. Charles, on location with *Gas*. The crew works beside what looks like a rusting, 30-foot-high oil tank, but actually it's an elaborate plywood and cardboard prop constructed by the art department. Inside

the tank are five catcher cars, which will absorb the shock when a speeding tow truck crashes through the tank's cardboard cutaway during a stunt a few days from now. This morning's shooting is what director Les Rose likes to call "geography" — nothing intense, just getting people in and out of cars and doing the work that will set up the gags in this unusual comedy.

At the base of the tank, screen veteran Sterling Hayden and a newcomer, a peregrine falcon named Igor, work through a scene. The script calls for Hayden, and his pet predator to discover Hayden's son tampering with the oil tank containing hoarded gasoline; inadvertently, someone gives Igor's command to attack. Consequently, the bird soars into the sky after a helicopter, with the inevitable result — a pile of feathers tumbling down upon the dejected Hayden.

But right now, they're trying to get the falcon to fly straight up into the air. Igor's trainer, perched on an adjacent scaffolding, has tied fishing wire to his bird's claws so he won't fly far. Three cameras, one hand-held, stand ready to record the action. Crouched on one knee behind Sterling Hayden, poised to fire the blank gun that should send the falcon flying, is Les Rose. Fun jobs are a director's prerogative.



Keith Knight (left) and Peter Ackroyd, unleaded or otherwise, are really a Gas!

Rose calls for a take. They're shooting MOS (without sound) but most people stop grabbing anyway, to observe. Rose calls, "Action." Hayden delivers his lines. And off-camera, first assistant director John Fretz gives the falcon's command. Rose then pulls the trigger, and the expensively-trained falcon flutters awkwardly to its trainer's perch a few feet away.

"Oh, Jesus," mutters Sterling Hayden, laughing and walking away.
"Cut!"

The scene repeats itself three times, then Rose gets an idea. He fires three shots instead of one. The falcon darts up into the air. Rose consults director of photography René Verzier: they got it. Time to break for lunch.

A \$6 million Filmplan production, *Gas* concerns the gasoline shortage which produced long line-ups and short tempers at filling stations across the United States last year. Set somewhere in Southern California, sometime in the present, the screenplay features eight to ten principal characters. Sterling Hayden plays Baron Duke Stuyvesant, the millionaire owner of the West Star oil chain, who is hoarding gasoline to artificially drive up the prices.

Donald Sutherland plays a disc jockey flying a megaphone-equipped helicopter for radio station WREQ in search of the shortest gas line-ups. Susan Anspach portrays a television journalist, playfully patterned after Jane Fonda's character in *The China Syndrome*. In the gas lines, Keith Knight plays a surly service station

attendant, and Helen Shaver a hooker working the lines from her van. Sandee Currie plays the girl who accidentally discovers the hidden gasoline, Howie Mandel her love interest, and Peter Aykroyd her jealous brother, whose karate attacks usually inflict more damage on himself than on his adversaries.

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"We're going after a broader, and not strictly a youth, audience," says Gas producer Claude Héroux, who last teamed with Rose to make *Hog Wild*. Héroux ambles about the set, chatting with the director, clowning with the cast and crew, an amiable, welcome man. It's the ninth week of a twelve-week shoot, and everything appears to be going smoothly; the only problem has been the weather. Although they've run out of cover shots, the wettest July on record has not put the production a single day behind schedule.

Today it's hot and sunny, perfect weather to pretend it's California.

"Claude Héroux is the best producer in the country," says Les Rose with obvious respect. "He runs a class organization where people are treated well, with respect and dignity. He's such a nice guy, but you know he's tight when he has to be. But he always has a reason, so as a director you don't mind. He'll say, 'Do you mind if we don't wreck a car today? We can't afford it because we wrecked one last week.'"

"In this film, we're playing with some pretty surreal ideas. Some may work, some may not. That bit with the falcon is a broad kind of gag. Claude is taking a big gamble."

Only his fourth feature film, Rose's work on *Gas* has been pleasing. "Because of Les, everyone is working well," says Sandee Currie. "He's always there for advice. He makes me feel comfortable, so I'm not afraid to ask questions. And he has a real knack for comedy." Adds Sterling Hayden, "He's interesting. Reminds me of Frankenheimer. Before that scene with the falcon, he told me, 'Just pretend he's your old drinking buddy.' And it worked!"

"This is a tremendous opportunity for me," says Rose, "because there are so many aspects of the medium involved. The big budget films are giving Canadian directors a chance to work on a much larger scale than before — work with huge crowds, stunts, special effects, animals." The difficulties of directing comedy have not yet intimidated him. "Sometimes you think, 'My God, what if it's not funny?' But doing comedy, you have to suspend that adult critical apparatus and go with the gut reaction. You can't over-intellectualize. A joke, or a poignant moment on the screen... if you take it apart intellectually, it falls like a house of cards. You have to *feel* it."

The 32-year-old, Saskatchewan-born director feels strongly about building an indigenous Canadian film industry. "Whatever the problems in Canadian film, they are not in front of the camera, or directly behind it."

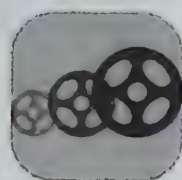
"No offense to my American colleagues, but Canadian talent is going to make this picture. Peter Aykroyd is just as brilliant as his brother, if not more. I think Sandee Currie is going to be really special in this film. And Keith Knight is a master of comedy, a real student of everything from Buster Keaton to *The Three Stooges* to *The Marx Brothers*."

Rose blames the executive producers for being neither courageous nor innovative enough. "*Hog Wild* was a well-done film, but it was cynically conceived, to make money. You can't fool an audience; if a picture is cynically conceived, they'll know it. The industry must start taking more risks. The riskiest thing right now is to continue copying other films, because we're never going to be a good B-Industry."

And is *Gas* just another cynically conceived Canadian film?

"No. It's different. Different enough. It's a lot less cynical than most things I've done, and I've got to give the executive producers credit for that."

Bruce Malloch



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photo: Shin Sugino

On location in Spain, *Misdeal*'s producer Michael Lebowitz and director John Trent — great minds thinking alike?

Misdeal

p.c. Quadrant/MLI Film Production p. Michael Lebowitz exec. p. David Perlmutter d. John Trent d.o.p. John Coquillon story David Rothberg sc. John Hunter, Rick Rosenthal & John Trent ed. Al Streeter, Kerry Kohler (1st assist), Hayden Streeter (2nd assist) sd. Jacques Bradette p. man. Bob Linnell a.d. Tony Lucibello (1st), Erika Zborosky (2nd) office assist. Wendy Ross loc. man. Keith Large p. co-ord. Alice Ferrier p. account. Shirley Gill, Shirley Granger (assist.) assist. p. Ruth Shaw cont. Lisa Wilder art. d. Bill Beeton, Alicia Keywan (1st assist), Lindsey Goddard (2nd assist.) set dress. Jacques Bradette, Jo-Ann Chorney (assist.) prop. master Hilton Rosemarin, Robert James (2nd props.) ward. Linda Matheson, Mary McCready (assist.) cam. op. Bob Saad, Jock Martin (1st assist.), Raul Randra (2nd assist.) gaf. Ray Boyle best boy Malcolm Kendal key grip John Hackett best boy grip Jim Krauter make-up Maureen Sweeney hair Malcolm Tanner sd. mix Rodney Haykin boom Omar Pataracchia coffee Brad Blackwood transp. co-ord. Bill Jackson stills Shin Sugino casting office Stuart Aiken, Ross Clydesdale, Michael Henderson l.p. John Heard, Levon Helm, Stephen McHattie, Alberta Watson, John Rhys Davies, Benjamin Gordon, Hrant Alianak, Moses Znaimer, David Calderisi, Michael Ironside, Martin Doyle, Angus MacInnes, Michael Ayoub, Tim McCauley unit pub. David McCaughna p.r. Marlene Smith & Co.

Although the old Sackville public school has been closed down and empty for some time now, it recently saw one of

its busier days when director John Trent and crew invaded its halls to do some location shooting for a new film — one of the few to be shot in Toronto this summer. Titled *Misdeal*, the film has so far been tagged as a drug-smuggling flick by the local papers, but Trent has his own definition of what the film deals with. "It's the story of one man's personal growth," he says, gazing out from beneath a broad-brimmed hat onto an outdoor basketball court. "Although the action centers on a drug-smuggling caper that takes the characters from Toronto to Morocco, the heart of the film will deal with the internal struggle of protagonist John Heard, who will be seen as a rehabilitated dealer who is coerced into returning to the drug market."

Also to be seen with Heard are Stephen McHattie, Alberta Watson, CITY-TV producer Moses Znaimer, John Rhys-Davies, playwright Hrant Alianak, and Levon Helm, who spent some of his time during the shooting schedule facing the cameras by day and bashing his drums at *The Nickelodeon* by night.

Trent is especially pleased with his cast, referring to McHattie and Heard as "two of the most interesting young performers in films today."

During a set-up period at the schoolyard, things appeared to be in a continual state of gradual motion; trucks pulling in and out of the yard, extras being assembled, equipment slowly being placed properly. Director of photography John Coquillon, recently a Genie winner for his work in *The Changeling*, made his way slowly through the loitering bodies while assistant director Tony Lucibello dickered through his walkie-talkie with a camera crew setting-up on a rooftop opposite the school.

Written by David Rothberg, a young commodity and currency specialist, *Misdeal* has gone through several re-writes, with Rick Rosenthal and John Hunter contributing patches of new dialogue, alongside Trent himself. One scene I read from the script — a confrontation between Watson and Znaimer — had been completely re-written, the original text gone. When it came time for Znaimer and Watson to film the scene they appeared to have less trouble with the lines themselves than with the mood needed to make the scene come alive. Several takes and a discussion or two into the shooting



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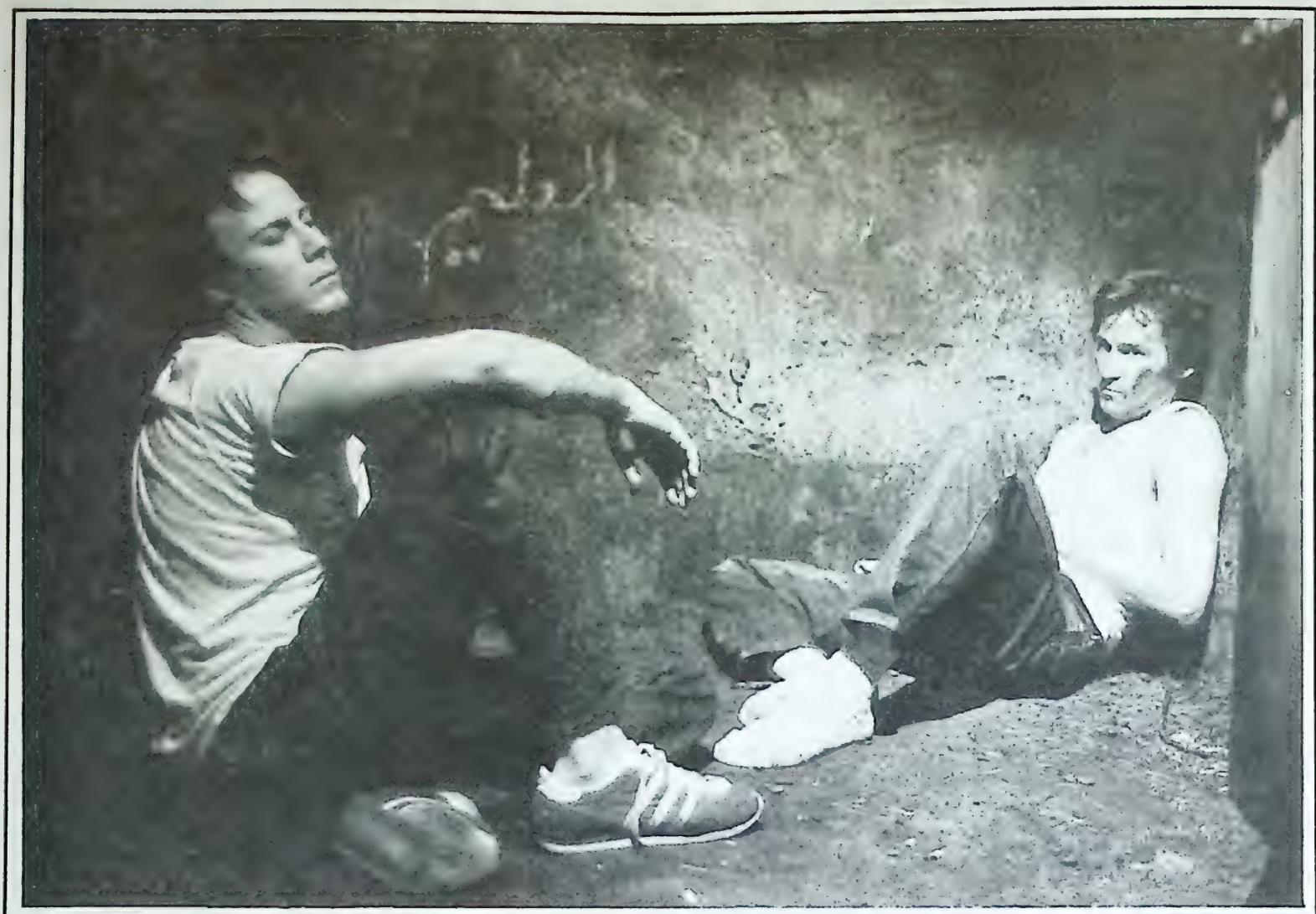


photo : Shin Sugino

A lousy deal for *Misdeal*'s John Heard and Levon Helm, killing time in a Moroccan jail

yielded the necessary electricity to make the scene work.

"Good scripts are exceptionally difficult

to find," said Trent "This one in particular is fine, and we're sticking pretty close to it.

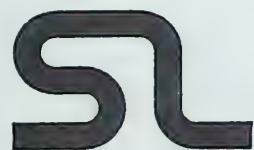
The main problem you find with most

scripts is that sometimes the writer won't plan the scenes to play as well as they could. That's where we depart from the script, in making the scenes more variable in the visual sense."

When everyone is finally ready to start shooting, the quiet settles, and Heard and McHattie begin swatting a basketball about while discussing the drug market. Heard bats the ball too close to the camera, ruining the take. He curses loudly and clobbers the ball, sending it flying across the court and past his off-screen companion, actress Brooke Adams, who sits quietly reading a book. The scene is set up again and several good takes are shot.

"The tension in that scene is very important," says Stephen McHattie later, explaining that he is part of the forces that badger Heard back to his old life of crime. But away from the cameras, everyone seems relaxed, and whatever tensions there are get worked off in a bit of dribbling between Lebowitz, Trent and Heard.

Mike Leo



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short and sweet

by pat thompson

The increased screening of short films is long overdue. But finally, short filmmakers are getting a break. Pat Thompson describes what she looks for when selecting shorts for the new Cineplex 16mm theatres.



The trouble is choosing... Cineplex, at Toronto's Eaton Centre, boasts eighteen 16mm theatres.

I've long been fascinated by the short film and always approach it with a considerable amount of zest and excitement. To me, it represents a breeding ground for the embryonic feature filmmaker, a testing ground for wild and whacky ideas, a visual canvas on which to express beauty and poetry in many shapes and forms, and an arena for opinionated opinions and deeply-felt wrongs that should be righted.

After years of film viewing, I can still conjure up vivid images from James Broughton's *The Pleasure Garden* screened at an Edinburgh Film Festival over 25 years ago; a first taste of 3-D from Norman MacLaren at the Festival of Britain in the fifties; and Minnie and Mickey Mouse magic at a Saturday morning film club in Britain.

The Start

When the *Cineplex* concept of 16mm multi-theatres was first considered by N.A. (Nat) Taylor and Garth Drabinsky, along with the diversified types of films to be shown, it was exciting to learn that short subjects were also envisaged to round out the programming. With the advent of *Cineplex/Eaton Centre* in Toronto, the first complex of 18 cinemas, I was offered the far from arduous task of selecting the short films to be screened — and jumped in with both feet.

Rules and guidelines for locating and using 16mm short films in a theatrical situation are, as far as I know, non-existent. And so — with a fair amount of glee — I've started from scratch. A background in film society and film theatre is my most valuable asset. In two decades, I've seen a wide variety of short films from all over the world — animation, experimental, funny, serious, weird, wonderful, and generally exciting outbursts of celluloid creativity. Unfortunately, they never reached the screens of the regular cinemas I patronized which were, of course, 35mm. The experiments made and the chances taken were in the less expensive 16mm format, and these were the ones I was after.

The Selection

There is an abundant supply of 16 mm prints to choose from for use in the *Cineplex* system, and the selection process continues from week to week. (I'm generally reluctant to look at a film with its maker present, as this often creates a somewhat nerve-racking atmosphere — the filmmaker tries to peer at me in the semi-darkness to gauge my reaction, and I try to imagine myself

Patricia Thompson is short film programmer for Cineplex and editor of the Canadian Film Digest Yearbook.



From the short film *The Metamorphosis of Mr. Samsa* (NFB)

alone!) I usually gather up two or three films to see at one time, or to set up screening sessions, of about two hours, with various companies and organizations.

In screening each film — I *never* program a short film that I've not seen — I look for a professional quality and sheen in the photography, editing, and other technical aspects, plus a good pace in relation to the subject matter. A new idea, a turn or twist of an old idea, a little charm and style, suitable music, a sense of humour and fun... Any or all of these ingredients, that can capture and intrigue an audience, are eminently desirable. Sometimes a witty notion, engagingly rendered by a filmmaker can overcome one or two shortcomings in the technical area.

I must, however, confess to having some really strong dislikes when viewing — voices that *tell* me what I can see perfectly well in the visuals; intrusive music whether it be loud or soft; and sloppy technique.

Because the *Cineplex* policy is to run separate shows of roughly two hours' duration, *length* often narrows the choice. Have you noticed how *long* features are these days? Consequently, shorts of about five to fifteen minutes stand the best chance of being used. Also, colour prints have it all over black-and-white offerings, since features are inevitably in Tech. Black-and-white tends to lose impact when programmed with colour features — after all, a *Manhattan*



Bubble — David Troster's film tribute to his Jewish

doesn't come along every day!

The really hard part is rejecting a film — and I turn down many. I may like a part of it, hate the whole, or recognize the effort, but for whatever reason, I always try to say "No thanks" in a constructive and kindly way.

The Sources

The premier source of Canadian short films is, of course, the National Film Board. (I've always been convinced that NFB films are not selected and programmed with enough care, and that's why people groan in a 35mm house, and generally head out for popcorn,



Claude Jutra outwitted by a chair in the NFB's *A Chairy Tale*



grandmother.

when the green logo goes up on the screen.)

Because the *Cineplex* head office operation is located in Toronto, that area is mined for independent companies and groups. However, now that the filmmakers themselves are becoming conscious of this small, but growing market, they telephone and call upon me offering prints for viewing. Word of mouth has resulted in some nice little finds, and I think the individual filmmakers like dealing directly with the person who actually selects and programs, and who is in a position to say "Yes" or "No" without hesitation.

The Programming

It's of paramount importance to bear in mind, when programming for a theatrical situation, that the general public has paid for an afternoon or evening of entertainment. Nat Taylor is absolutely right when he says, "People don't pay money at the box office to see a short subject." However, many have remarked at *Cineplex* that it's refreshing to see more than the feature.

Features fall into a few broad categories — general entertainment such as dramas, comedies, actioners; foreign films in the original language with English sub-titles; and the specialized films dealing with an intellectual or difficult subject matter. The accompanying short film can be on the same theme — comic with comedy, serious with drama — or can offer a contrast, such as a light cheerful short preceding a weighty, intense feature. Some are simply visually pleasant, i.e. country or town life, nature... and can complement a number of features. Then there are those which are "just for fun" or "just for the hell of it" — certain experimental films, for example. The age group to which a feature appeals must also be considered. A short with a rock score appreciated by teens and twenties will not necessarily bowl over the forties!

These programming choices illustrate what I mean: Caroline Leaf's *The Metamorphosis of Mr. Samsa* (NFB) ran 17 weeks with *Midnight Express*; *Hardware Wars*, a U.S. space-spoof with

electric irons and toasters flying around, played 10 weeks with *The Rubber Gun*; Barry Stone's *Dog* — dogs doing doggy things and making comments in variously accented human voices — ran 8 weeks in all with *Your Turn, My Turn*, *Escape From Alcatraz*, and *The Last Married Couple*. Hokusai, from the Arts Council of Great Britain — about an ancient Japanese artist — was 12 weeks with *The Seduction of Joe Tynan*, while David Troster's *Bubbie*, a lovingly created tribute to his Jewish grandmother, played 8 weeks with *Yiddle With His Fiddle*. An NFB oldie, *A Chairy Tale*, by Norman MacLaren — Claude Jutra trying to sit on a recalcitrant chair — played 12 weeks with *The Silent Partner*.

I try to use as many Canadian short films as possible, with a balanced sprinkling from other countries. In the first 52 weeks of operation at *Cineplex/Eaton Centre* in Toronto, 68 short films were programmed. Of these, 38 were Canadian (20 independent and 18 NFB) and 30 were from other countries.

The Rewards

The financial reward for the filmmaker is, let's face it, not great — and never has been where theatrical exhibition of short subjects is concerned. But to my mind, it's a fine opportunity and testing ground for a filmmaker to get a reaction to his creation. I've had a movie maker ring up on a terrific high because an audience had laughed loud and long with genuine amusement at his film; and another, who reported in hushed tones that people actually applauded at the end of his film. It may be corny, but that's something money cannot buy. And if a short film is good enough, there are other markets where it could be profitable — T.V. and educational print sales, to name a couple.

The Future

Within the next year the *Cineplex* concept will spread across Canada. It has already begun its expansion in Ontario: in July *Cineplex/6* opened in Kitchener, with Burlington and Ottawa following in August. There will be others in and around Toronto, and eventually, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver, for starters.

It's easy to see that the need for Canadian short films will grow, and that prints can be used in, say, Toronto, and then circulated across the country to the various *Cineplex* operations. Ultimately, this will mean more exposure for films from Canadian filmmakers, with more playing time leading to more revenue.

It looks like the renaissance of the 16mm short film, doesn't it?

jan kadar

by nicholas pasquariello

For Czech director Jan Kadar, the making of *Lies My Father Told Me* proved to be a mixed blessing. Today, his comments are especially pertinent as the film industry measures the distance it has come since 1974, and questions the direction in which it is headed.



In the limelight, director Jan Kadar on set with *Lies My Father Told Me*.

To most North American cinephiles the name Jan Kadar is probably synonymous with one feature film, *The Shop on Main Street* (1965), which won the American Academy Award for Best Foreign Film of that year. *The Shop on Main Street* — which Kadar co-directed with Elmar Klos — heralded a veritable renaissance in the Czechoslovak film industry, accompanied as it was during the 1960's, by an outpouring of fresh and invigorating feature films by directors such as Jan Nemec, Milos Forman, and Ivan Passer.

With the fall of the Dubcek regime in the late 60's, many prominent Czech directors — among them Kadar, Forman, Passer — finding working conditions in their home country intolerable, emigrated to the West.

Jan Kadar, at first, went only across the Czech border to Vienna. While there he received an offer to direct his first North American feature, *Angel Levine* (1970), an offer, he later described, as one he could not refuse. For a brief time, he was commuting between New York and Czechoslovakia, to complete *Adrift* (his last Czech feature), whose shooting had been interrupted by the Soviet invasion of '68.

From 1973 through 1979, Kadar directed five TV movies for non-commercial and commercial networks in the U.S. and Canada. As with his earlier pictures, these generally dealt with themes of human rights — notably, freedom of conscience in a hostile and often brutal society (*The Case Against Milligan*); and the sane man/woman in an insane society (*The Other Side of Hell*).

For Kadar, it was very important that he be able to identify with the subject matter — if not the main characters — of his films. At one point, he said:

"The main problem is that you shouldn't make such a compromise that you always feel that you're doing something you don't want to do, or which you cannot identify with, or which you feel you cannot be responsible for."

In a number of Jan Kadar's pictures one can readily see his reasons for identifying with their subject matter, based on two important facts of his life: his Jewish background, and his incarceration in a concentration camp during the war. These subjects immediately form the basis of *Lies My Father Told Me*, and *The Shop on Main Street*, respectively.

Nicholas Pasquariello is a filmmaker, teacher, and journalist, whose articles have appeared in Filmmakers Newsletter, American Cinematographer, ACTION, Millimeter, and Jump Cut. He is presently on a college tour in California, with his recent film, Susan Weinberg: Artist.



Young David (Jeffrey Lynas) with his two best friends in the world: Zaida (Yossi Yadin) — his idol — and Ferdeleh, the horse (rump right)

Mendelstam's Witness is based on the biography of the Russian Jewish poet.

An amount of controversy has surrounded the making of *Lies My Father Told me*, which was shot in Montreal in '73 and '74. Questions such as the following remain less than fully answered: the picture went overbudget by approximately \$300,000 (about 30%). Why? Whose fault was it? What role did the Canadian Film Development Corporation (which helped finance *Lies*) play in the problems and/or their solution? How difficult (or easy) is it for foreign directors (especially of non-Commonwealth countries) to work in Canada? In the course of this interview Kadar discussed some of these questions.

A more personal note. I knew Jan Kadar *en passant*, while I was associated with the American Film Institute in Beverly Hills, California. He was Filmmaker-in-Residence there from 1975 until his sad and untimely death last year. When one thinks of meeting and talking with Kadar, comparisons with his films seem inevitable. Words like: sentimental, jovial, temperamental (and willing to admit it), always smiling (every production still from *Lies* that I've seen, shows him smiling, immensely enjoying his work). He always seemed to have a cigarette dangling from his lips, or in his hand, and rarely seemed



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A family circle, but not always happy — for David and his father cannot see eye-to-eye on anything

very relaxed. Jan Kadar displayed an amount of Old World charm, humility, and perhaps even, naïveté, rarely if ever found among film directors on this side of the Atlantic.

NP: *Would it be correct to describe **Lies My Father Told Me** as a realistic portrayal of events?*

JK: The picture is not realistic because it is a childhood filtered through memory, and does not present it as it really was. The characters are not realistic. The characters are also filtered through remembrance, therefore they sometimes have cartoon-like qualities.

In *Lies*, there are basically two philosophies: the naïve philosophy of the old man, and the very realistic view of life of the father.

NP: *Well, the father is not at all close to his son.*

JK: He is not close to the son, but he is not far. I did not want to create a monster for the father. I know that Ted Allen (screenwriter on *Lies*) was very influenced by his relationship with his own father.

And he didn't like his father at all. But I tried to soften the whole thing because I'm trying to understand the father; I do not hate him.

The father is basically a dreamer, the old man is also a dreamer on his own, and a believer. The Marxist is a dreamer and a believer on his own. It's interesting that these two extremes can communicate very well though they are at different points on the political spectrum. But both of them had some kind of belief.

NP: *How did you work with Ted Allen, your screenwriter on **Lies**?*

JK: Very well. The relationship between the writer and the director on a picture depends on the personalities, and also on what kind of picture it is, and what kind of director it is. Some directors work alone on their scripts, some directors take scripts and film them as is.

One day I got from Mr. Gulkin from Canada, a script which Ted Allen had written as an adaptation of his original story. And I read this script and I liked certain basic ideas — but not everything that was written in the script. This was in

'72. I liked the basic feeling of the whole thing. He wrote, with my cooperation, basically a new script. It would be hard to recognize what exactly remained from the old script.

The material of the original script, which Gulkin presented to me, was based on Ted Allen's experiences as a child and his relationship with his grandfather. I told him that I liked the basic idea and the feeling of the material, but that I couldn't make a picture about him and grandfather... I *could* make a picture about a grandfather and a little boy, about a family, which would be everybody's experience, with which I could identify myself.

The basic conception of Allen's original script that inspired me was the idea that finally, in the end, everything which is beautiful is destroyed. The little boy has his own world which he likes so much. The first enemy of this world is the father. The second enemy is Mrs. Tannenbaum. Then the third enemy which is going against the boy is the coming of the new baby.

The little boy is living in his own world



No question of direction for Jan Kadar, working it out on location with Howard Ryshpan (left)

with his grandfather and the horse. The father, who hates this way of life, would like to get out of the ghetto. With his inventions he hopes to make it. Mrs. Tannenbaum hates the smell of the horse... But the little boy and his grandfather overcome all of these obstacles. But then the new baby is born. That's overcome, too. Then the society is getting involved when the official comes and tells them to close the stable and get rid of the horse. And they overcome even this obstacle. But then the old man, is dying. Dies.

This kind of structuring and philosophy was not basically in the original story. But there has to be some kind of drama. This approach is realistic in its outlook, but is not completely realistic in its details, or the characters' feelings.

The question is: while not being realistic can you sometimes be much more truthful?

NP: Do you storyboard your pictures?

JK: No. For my first picture I prepared storyboards. It doesn't mean that I'm not making the necessary preparation, but in

a different way. I don't need to make a storyboard because I see it. I'm not a very good drawer myself. I make sketches and breakdowns, and the like; especially from the point of view of the editing. And I make some preparation which is strictly for me, done before I go on the set, certainly...

You have to shoot for the editing. Let's say you are editing in the camera. You are not editing cuts, you are editing composition of the sequence; you prepare for yourself sufficient material for the editing. It means that you could change the pace of the whole thing as written, and not face a problem with coverage.

I make some sketches that relate to the line script: from where and up to where you are shooting; how you are covering it, how the medium shot and close-up, and the reverse shot all relate to one another. I make these notes in order to remember — not to shoot according to them. In other words, I'm making these preparations just to make up my mind. And the person with whom I most often discuss these notes is the script supervisor. At the beginning of the day we discuss

what we shall shoot that day.

Usually, if you are well-prepared, you don't need a script on the set. You have in your eyes the whole sequence anyway. At the beginning of the setting up of a new sequence I might refer to my notes. But once it is in progress you just continue the next day. I do my preparation each evening during a production. That cannot be kept a secret, so I have to tell everything to the script supervisor, to my first assistant (director), and to the cameraman.

In a sequence such as the birth in *Lies* the cameraman had to know exactly what we would shoot and how the whole thing was conceived; because he had to make his plan. He had to know what we were trying to achieve...

I like to select the locations with the cameraman, myself. For the cameraman, the period of the preparation is very important. When I first came here (to North America) I was surprised that the cameraman has so little time to prepare a picture. In Czechoslovakia, it was usual for the cameraman to be involved in the

preparation for the picture two months before shooting began.

NP: *How did you begin your relationship with Paul Van Der Linden (director of photography on *Lies*)?*

JK: When I came to Canada, I didn't know anybody, and the producer introduced me to several cameramen. Paul was a long-time assistant to two good Canadian d.o.p.s (directors of photography); he also had made one picture on his own. And I liked his work.

We also had another cameraman who worked on this picture, Mr. Arpad Makay. He's a Hungarian cameraman who came to the United States in the fifties. I had the feeling that Paul needed help, especially in the studio, because he was not very used to the studio, but very talented. Basically, it was a collaborative effort.

Makay was a very experienced good cameraman in Hungary before and after the war. He came to the United States, in the fifties, before the other Hungarians came (after the Hungarian uprising). He didn't have quite the luck to break through as Zsigmond and Kovaks. So *Lies* is the first picture, here, in which he shows that he is a very good craftsman and a good cameraman. He shot many of the more distinguished Hungarian pictures made before and after the war.

In working with the cameraman, it is important that he know as much as possible about the picture he is shooting, because he has to work with his means to achieve the main goal of the whole picture. He has to prepare himself the same way as the director prepares himself with this actors. The cameraman is not someone who is just coming on a set merely to set up the lights. He has to have his own conception.

Look, for instance, at the ideal co-operation that exists between Nykvist and Bergman. They don't even need to speak to each other, they know each other so well. In Prague, for instance, it was quite possible that you would work with certain cameramen regularly. In my whole career I used basically three cameramen, most of my pictures were done with two of them. *Shop On Main Street* and *Adrift* were shot by the same cameraman. *The Kidnapping* and *The Defendant* were shot by the same cameraman.

I prefer to work with the same crew, with the same art director, with the same cameraman, and with the same assistant director.

NP: *Isn't it very hard for you to do that now?*

JK: It's hard for anyone to do that here because you have a completely different setting. You know, the people there

[Czechoslovakia] were on monthly salaries so that they could survive, for instance, if they had to wait for a picture for two or three months. They could afford it. Here, it is different: you need to be in a certain position where you can afford to keep your people on salary from film to film; certainly a rarity.

NP: *How much preparation time did you have on *Lies* with the cameraman?*

JK: When I came to Montreal, we selected the locations, such as the courtyard. The cameraman knew about them. He then started to make tests there. It was many weeks later (probably four or five) that the shooting of *Lies* commenced.

NP: *Why did *Lies* go overbudget?*

JK: First of all, the producer made up an 'ideal' budget which made no allowance for contingencies. The producer made the budget with the hope that everything would run completely smoothly. Right away, making an ideal budget is a mistake because nothing is going ideally. Here [U.S.], for instance, when a studio makes a budget it's a very well structured budget, and basically, everything is under control. This is not a complaint, it is a fact; because Canada is not a place where filmmaking has a big and longtime tradition, producing any feature there is always a bit of an adventure.

Another reason was the inexperience of the producer. Mr. Bedrich, who was a very good production manager in Czechoslovakia, came to Canada to try to become a producer. It was a very different thing to be a production manager, and then to be a producer here; because it's a different task. The other producer, Mr. Gulkin, with *Lies My Father Told Me*, was making his first picture. He can become a producer, but one has to pay one's dues. But I'm not blaming them for it; but I just refuse something else: that they should blame me. Everybody makes mistakes. In retrospect, I think *Lies* could have cost less to make, between \$800,000 and \$900,000. They're now claiming it went to \$1.1 and \$1.2 million. It would have cost less to make if the whole thing had been executed by the producer on a really professional level, it had been well organized, and we hadn't had to wait a year to finish it. The producers wrote to me saying that *Lies* had to be edited by a Canadian editor. I complained, saying that I would like to have my editor on the picture — whether or not we had a Canadian editor, and whether or not it made sense. Under these conditions, one should not be surprised that things were getting more expensive. I did finally achieve everything that I wanted in terms of the final editing.



Actor Len Birman sharing a joke with director Jan Kadar

The main problem was that *Lies* should have had a more realistic budget. Whatever amount the picture went over budget represented the dues this new producer was paying due to his lack of experience. I also made my mistakes — a lot of minor things — some sequences were better prepared, some less so. But not more than in any of my other pictures. 95 percent of what I shot is in the picture. If I had made mistakes in this area of the production, then it would have been costly. To a minor degree everyone contributed to *Lies* going overbudget. I was very upset by what I heard in Canada: that I was entirely responsible for *Lies* going overbudget. That, I refuse to accept.

NP: *I understand that you had some disagreements, specifically with the Canadian Film Development Corporation (CFDC)?*

JK: It is understandable why some of these disagreements happen. Canada is developing its own film industry, and trying very hard to do it. And doing it under quite difficult conditions, namely, the pressure from the American competi-



tion. And the CFDC, which is set up for helping the Canadian film industry, intends to give to Canadians the greatest opportunities to work. That is absolutely fair... I agreed with it, and I had, basically, a full Canadian crew, and a good crew. In the beginning, certainly, they had differing kinds of experience, so some were better, some were less-experienced. During the making of the picture it became a really good crew. But there were certain moments, especially in terms of the editing, the music and the mixing, when I tried to get the best possible conditions — as anybody would — for the finishing of the picture; and here we had our disagreement. I didn't refuse to use Canadian talents, not at all. I tried to get certain people whom I felt more confident working with. And we did have some disagreement which, finally, we were able to resolve.

So, I have no special complaints, only one. That when the picture was in trouble, the Canadian Film Development Corporation didn't really give me the opportunity to speak about it. For what reason I don't know.

But look, I am not opposed to the rules of the Canadian Film Corporation, that's alright. But sometimes situations and problems have to be solved in a flexible way. But they didn't bother me. I would rather they had bothered me than allow to happen what happened. But, at least, they did not prevent me from doing what I felt was necessary to do.

If the picture hadn't been finished or hadn't come to some kind of end result, then maybe all of these disagreements and confrontations would have more importance. When the end is good everything is good.

NP: Did you know this going into the picture?

JK: I should have known it, and perhaps I made a mistake in not being tougher in asking for a more secure budget. It would not have made any sense anyway because there was no money there.

Weather conditions also played a role: we couldn't catch the winter sequences in '73, and we had to finish it in '74.

NP: Was it a compromise for you to direct *Lies*?

JK: No. I still have the same dreams and ideals as before — projects which I would like to do... really — and *Lies* came about as a project which I never knew about.

NP: Did it fulfill some of those dreams?

JK: No. The dreams are something else. I have talked about them before, many times, and I have promised myself that I won't speak about them anymore until they become more of a reality. If I have to speak very frankly, you cannot wait for dreams, you have to work. And you have to choose a subject with which you can identify yourself in the best way. I am glad that I did this picture and not something else.

NP: You are proud of it.

JK: Be careful with this word of being proud or not proud. I would rather say I feel comfortable with *Lies*.

Look, in this entire business, when the technique is so complicated, when it costs so much money... it has to be this way. The main problem is that you shouldn't make such a compromise that you always feel that you're doing something you don't want to do, or which you cannot identify with, or which you feel you cannot be responsible for.

What I will try to do in the future is to think twice before I commit myself to a project. The built-in failure can most often be in the property that you are picking up, and in the subject and content that you are working with.

NP: Last year didn't you also direct a film for television for CBC-Toronto?

JK: Yes.

NP: Did you experience any production problems similar to those experienced on *Lies*?

JK: No problems. It was the opposite experience. An unheard of thing happened. I was invited by Mr. John Hirsch of the CBC, to Toronto, to work on a project with them. There were logistical problems that prevented me from leaving New York. During our meeting Mr. Hirsch presented me with a script, and asked my advice about it. The script was scheduled to be directed by Mr. Joe MacGreevy, a very good and intelligent TV director on the staff of CBC. This one-hour special was about the Russian poet, Mendelstam, based on the biography by his wife.

I gave them whatever advice I could; because I had lived very close to this type of situation. I suggested that they cast Miss Kaminska [who had been in Kadar's *Shop On Main Street*] as Mrs. Mendelstam. Cut. A week later I received a call from Mr. MacGreevy and Mr. Hirsch. Mr. MacGreevy said: it is my opinion that you would be a better director for this project than I. Please, would you accept directing this piece with me as the producer?

It never happened to me on this continent before: 'I think you would be better for this project than I, and therefore please do it. I shall do everything that I can to help you do it well, as a producer.' This was when I went to CBC to do this picture [*Mendelstam's Witness*].

So, here you have two Canadian experiences: one not very happy, and the other one, really excellent. ■

Jan Kadar's North American Filmography

Theatrical

1970 : *Angel Levine*

1975 : *Lies My Father Told Me*

Television

1973 : *Blue Hotel* PBS-TV

1974 : *Mendelstam's Witness*
CBC-TV

1975 : *The Case Against Milligan*
CBS-TV News

1978 : *The Other Side of Hell*
NBC-TV

1979 : *Freedom Road-Part One*

star drivers

by lois siegel

... out to prevent star wars, these tireless Trojans risk their lives in the call of duty, sacrifice their Hollywood ambitions to the cause of service, and ignore the call of nature to get their charges to the shoot on time.



photo: Lois Siegel

Faster than a speeding bullet, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound... star driver Robert Gibson

When movie stars come from Hollywood to Montreal, the setting may change, but they still want to be treated like they are in the States — where Walt Disney created fantasyland. So, someone has to pamper them, care for them, practically bodyguard them, and see that their every wish is fulfilled.

It could be said that God worked for six days, and then created the “star driver” — that unique species employed by a crew to drive the movie star from point A to point B, with a few detours in between. On call 25 hours a day, the star driver’s first priority is to *get along with* the star — no matter what!

“Initially, you learn to keep your mouth shut. You don’t talk about other stars, or say, ‘So-and-so is a lousy actor,’ because you don’t know who they know, and you don’t want to offend their friends,” cautions one driver. “And you also can’t be star struck.”

During the production of *Agency*, Valerie Perrine’s driver was told to always call first, then pick up his star one half-hour in advance; but he admits, “I never did that because I would get there and she’d still be in bed, and she’d be hung over or something. So I’d call the set and say, ‘Give us about an hour.’ Sometimes I’d wait in the lobby and try to catch up on some sleep myself. It’s pretty hard to find somewhere close to the hotel to have a coffee at 5:30 in the morning.”

“On the other hand, Lee Majors was always super-punctual,” his driver Vincent Di Clemente contends. “He always used to say, ‘I’m very professional.’”

Robert Mitchum was a storyteller, the drivers report. He wasn’t happy unless he was telling a story. He’d tell stories anywhere — even in the bathroom.

For insurance purposes, drivers must be over 25 years old, although occasionally, arrangements for younger drivers can be made with the car rental companies. Not only must you be able to drive... you sometimes have to design floral arrangements for the stars when the flower shop is barely open on Sunday morning, or sign autographs!

“When the autograph hunters came by, I’d always tell them that the star was indisposed,” one driver admits. “And then the star’s manager told me just to sign for him; so I’d go away with the paper, sign it “Lee Majors” and come back. No one ever knew the difference, and they’d walk away happy.”

Though some stars say they want to be treated “just like a normal person,” the experienced driver knows better. What they really want is to frequent the best restaurants, the ‘in-crowd’ discos, and the bars like *Night Magic* in Old Montreal until 4 a.m., then sleep at the hotel from 6:30 to 7 a.m. — then sleep on the set. Lee Majors liked to go out with the drivers and drink beer. He was also big on Dilalo Burgers.

At the night spots the driver is expected to stay in the background. One driver who drove cab for seven years prior to driving stars said that it helped him to know the pros and cons of restaurants. He suggests *Roma Antiqua*

for those who like Italian food and *Ruby Foos* for the Chinese buffs. Then there’s *Les Halles* on Crescent street for French cuisine and *Le St. Amable* in Old Montreal. But not all stars prefer the high-class restaurants. Paul Newman liked the *Sun-Sun*, and Vince Van Patton preferred the Hungarian *Coffee Mill* on Mountain Street.

Besides working all night, a driver is kept constantly busy during the day. He goes shopping for the star, takes care of his banking, arranges various reservations, and picks up visitors at the airport. Frequently, the driver also finds time to watch the action on the set.

“It’s a must to be on the set if the star wants coffee or anything else,” one driver insists. “A driver is like a personal aide — sometimes he even watches continuity, because wardrobe can make a mistake. The driver should read the script to know the actor’s involvement. If you’re ignorant about what an actor’s doing, then you may say something to upset him. You’re driving him to the set for an important scene, so he doesn’t want to hear about the fish sandwich you ate last night.”

Sometimes a star even wants to rehearse a scene, and the driver suddenly finds himself practicing lines with the actor!

Location: La Cité Health Club

Vince Van Patton: “Mom, how come you never remarried?”

Driver Rick Disensi: “Well, it’s just that I haven’t found somebody.”

Vince Van Patton: “I really love you, Mom.”

Driver Rick Disensi: “Well, I love you too.”

The driver played Mom.



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Lois Siegel is presently completing two films — her first feature, *A 20th Century Chocolate Cake*; and *Extreme Close-Up*, a documentary about multi-handicapped blind people.

A driver is given a floater, ranging anywhere from \$150 to \$500, to cover any unexpected expenses. Rick Disensi had \$1000 for Paul Newman who didn't carry his own money. "He needed receipts for taxis, but he didn't want to have to ask for them, so I'd handle all the money." Then there are the special requests. For Robert Altman's birthday, Paul Newman asked Disensi to find him a live goat, so that Altman could have his own vineyard. (Newman always used to tease Altman that the wine he drank was no better than goat's piss...) "Newman made his request in the morning, and by noon he had his live goat! I went out to make a few phone calls, bought a goat for \$55 in St. Canut, and the goat was presented to Altman that night at rushes. A star driver needs access to everything in the city."

Newman also requested a race. Disensi consequently arranged entrance for him into various races along with a

Mini-Cooper racing car offered by another "friend." Then, Newman, a popcorn lover, had special poppers sent up from Los Angeles so that his driver — to whom he personally gave special popping lessons — could make his popcorn. "To Newman, money was no object," says Disensi, "no matter what we did."

Newman is known for being a speed freak. At dawn on Sunday mornings when there was little traffic, Disensi and Newman would start at The Howard Johnson Hotel on Sherbrooke and race towards the Expo site where the crew was shooting. "Every Sunday we tried to beat our record. We'd head down Sherbrooke, across Jacques-Cartier Bridge to Ste-Hélène's Island. Our record was 6 minutes and 27 seconds. (In normal traffic the drive would take a good 20 minutes to one half-hour).

Newman and Disensi were once driving casually in a mobile home, along the track of an ice race competition,



Nothing like getting his goat... Paul Newman's that is!

cartoon: Erik Sandmark

when another mobile home driven by another crew member passed them. Newman told Disensi, "Catch him."

"I was a little worried," Disensi admits. "I didn't want to overturn the mobile home and possibly break Newman's neck, so I said, 'I don't want to roll this thing,' and he said, 'Let's change.' So in mid-motion we changed drivers. Newman got in the driver's seat while we were doing about 30 m.p.h. Then he passed the other guy, the other guy passed him, and we decided to go around the track again! — a crazy race with these two mobile homes!"

A driver can make up to \$600 a week plus expenses, or as little as \$250 a week. The hours are long, but the benefits include constant entertainment and your own transportation. Also, stars often give their drivers presents when they depart — sometimes as much as \$1000 worth of cash and gifts: clothes, vintage bottles of wine, Melitta coffee makers... "Paul Newman gave me a hat — the one he wore in the movie *Hombre*. I'm a hat collector and he sent to California for it," Disensi adds.

Disensi also accompanied Newman on a jet jaunt. "A friend of Paul's, Peter Pocklington, who owns The Edmonton Oilers Hockey Team, came into town. The next day we took his private jet to Connecticut to look at a racing car he wanted to buy — on Paul's approval. Then we flew from Connecticut to Quebec City to see his hockey team that night. Then we flew back to Montreal and had to work early the next morning."

"If a star doesn't like you, you can be released right away," Disensi explains. "But a star who does like you might offer you a permanent job as his aide."

Disensi fell into the job as Newman's driver by accident. "I was an elevator mechanic for Otis. Construction was slow, so I began driving a cab. I met an old friend Allan Nichols, who had moved to Los Angeles, and he offered me a job on Altman's film *Quintet*. Now I don't want to work anywhere else."

Stars also arrive with loads of baggage, because sometimes they're on a set for as long as three months and they require large wardrobes — perhaps 10 or 11 cases. Vince Di Clemente used a five-ton truck borrowed from the art department to load Lee Majors' possessions. Majors also brought his own valet, Jim Cale, who is also a make-up man. Valerie Perrine brought her own costume designer. "He couldn't talk about anything but costumes. It just wasn't in his vocabulary," driver Robert Gibson reports. "He used to tell her she was beautiful at least 20 times a day."

Drivers (mostly male) claim that males are more suitable for the job. If a male stars wants to be "fixed-up" for the night, how is he going to ask a female driver? The males contend that they are also more capable of making certain illicit connections... Not to mention handling luggage which is often too heavy for females. "Girls might be more concerned with their love life at home or become emotionally involved with a male star," one driver argues.

"Most actors are very serious artists," David Smith adds. "They live in an international world and are extremely intelligent people." Smith, who has driven Vittorio Gassman, Paul Newman and Donald Sutherland, ran into trouble once on Altman's *Quintet*. He was assigned to pick up the vice-president of 20th Century-Fox and his wife at the airport. They were in town one day to see the set



Vincent Di Clemente (B.F.A. graduate in Cinema), behind the camera, before he got behind the steering wheel

and look at the rushes. Explains Smith, "I was silent at first, then we started talking. I told them about Montreal and the artistic community. Later, when I drove him to the hotel, we began talking again in a more relaxed manner. He could see I was interested in films. Then we talked about scripts. I said, 'How do you people decide on scripts?' He said that they were pretty open. I didn't press anything. He asked if I had written a script. I said I had. He said he would like to see it and to bring it to the film office the next morning. When I got to the office I left the script for him. Then I went to the set and the Head of Transport said to me, 'Did you tell Mr. X you had a script?' I said, 'Yes.' He said, 'You're fired!' I asked why. He said he couldn't say anything about it, it came from the higher-ups. I was then driven off the set, given my pay and I was out. I think the PR man had overheard something and had assumed that I had pressed the situation. Nobody questioned me. Nobody asked me what had happened."

This unpleasant experience aside, Smith relates one of the more interesting moments of his driving career: Donald Sutherland, who had just finished *Casanova* with Fellini, told him a good story about working with the famed Italian director. The film was a year-long shoot. During one scene, where *Casanova* had to lift a glass and drink from it, Fellini merely instructed Sutherland to "Lift the glass to your lips. O.K., fine. Cut!" Sutherland was justifiably nonplussed, unaware of the director's motivation for such an abbreviated motion — until three months later, when Fellini said to him, "Remember that scene where you lifted the glass? Now I want you to drink from it."

Drivers not only have to be charming, perceptive, witty and intelligent, they also must have a sixth sense in order to understand the location maps: "You need a simple map with a big 'X' marking the location. It's hard enough to remember where you parked the car the night before. One day no one could find the location and just drove around until they saw the generator truck. As a driver you have to answer to everyone. Sometimes the A.D.'s yelling at you, the director's yelling at you, the unit manager wants to kill you, and the entire crew is waiting for the star who suddenly feels like seeing a movie or doing some shopping." So what can the driver do? "Ah," says the voice of experience, "you get used to making up good stories!"

survival of the fittest



Survival films be damned! — Where's that hot toddy? Don Sutherland braving the elements for **Bear Island**

by david clarke

What's a "Canadian Film" anyway? David Clarke takes a serious look at the themes that dominated last year's features.

There has been endless and acrimonious debate over the sixty-odd features made in Canada last year. Critics have been dismembering the films because they have not fit snugly into some preconceived notion of what is authentically Canadian. **Out of the Blue** ran into trouble with Canadian cultural authorities at Cannes, because its story was judged to be not very relevant to Canadian concerns. In some quarters the entire Canadian Film Development Corporation (CFDC) was, and is, blamed for supporting the making of *un-Canadian* films.

Certainly, last year's feature boom triggered a revival of that well-worn debate, "What is Canadian?" As the filmmaking goes on, so does the debate — and the search for easy labels.

In her book *Survival*, Margaret Atwood provides critics with a handy yardstick for measuring the importance of new, Canadian, narrative art, whether it be in print or on film. She found that, traditionally, Canadians have been concerned with the theme of the *hero as survivor* in the face of harsh conditions; *survival* being the most the Canadian hero can expect by way of victory or reward. New work is authentically Canadian then, to the extent to which it deals with this theme — or so goes one argument.

In surveying the thematic content of last year's films, some interesting parallels and contrasts to Atwood's thesis can be drawn.

The 1979 Canadian film harvest produced an abundance of horror films. On the surface they would hardly seem to reflect anything of the national experience. But Atwood herself recognized the Canadian-ness of the horror theme. The film **Surfacing** — based upon her book — deals with the theme of terror ultimately surfacing from the waters which had concealed it.

Canadian history highlights the early pioneers who *lived* a horror show. Arriving in the early summer with no forewarning that it would soon be... getting... very... cold..., they could do little but hang on until the horror passed and spring came. Perhaps the Canadian experience has sensitized us to horror, in that the heroes of some of last year's films find themselves in relatively similar situations. For example, an innocent, or a group of them follow a normal course — buying a house in **The Changeling**, taking a sea voyage in **Death Ship**, writing scenarios in **Deadline** — when the curtain that shields everyday life is suddenly parted, and malevolent supernatural forces are exposed. Once this happens, the best that they can do is hang on for dear life, and hope to survive until the curtain is re-drawn and normality restored.

Some of last year's adventure-suspense films feature the same theme of innocence entangled, only it is not the netherworld that is stumbled into, but the underworld. The hero of **Highpoint** is a humble accountant-turned-chauffeur who, by misadventure, gets caught up in CIA intrigue. Nicole, the heroine of **Final Assignment** is working as a TV reporter covering a story, before she gets entangled. It is the death of his wife, not any desire for adventure, that involves the hero of **Double Negative**. But the ultimate in



Hot toddy indeed! D.D. Winters in her first starring role... (Eat your heart out Sutherland; **Tanya's Island** is in another world!)

innocence-entangled has to be William Coffin, in **The Coffin Affair**. He is leading the good life, just minding his own business, when out of the clear blue sky of the Gaspé drops a frame-up and death.

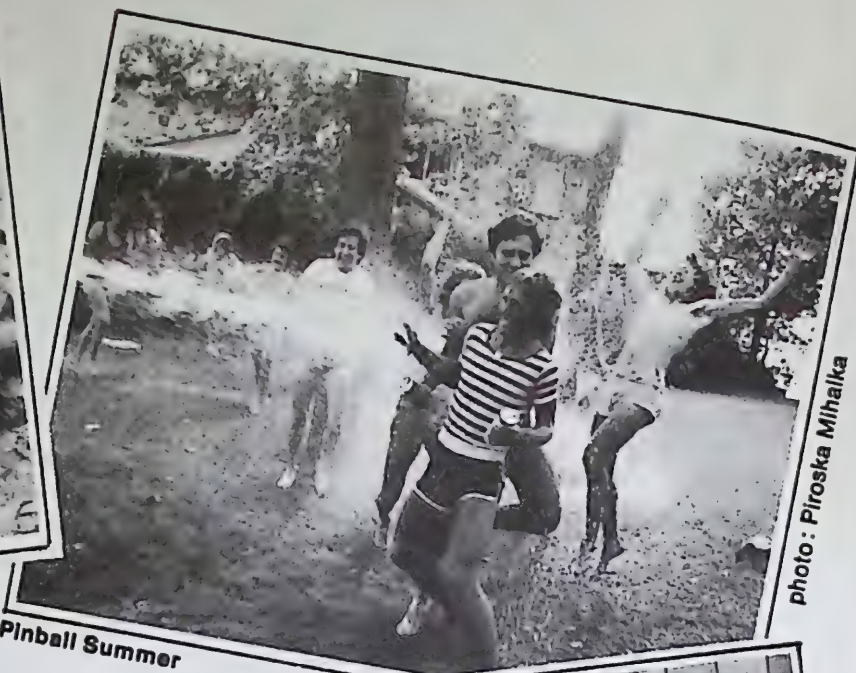
In contrast to these films, are the ones in which the heroes go looking for trouble. The hero of **The Kidnapping of the President** is a secret service agent who goes barrelling headfirst into a plot to kidnap the most powerful man in America. **Mr. Patman** features a rebel male nurse taking on the bureaucracy of a hospital, and **The Last Chase** features a rebellious old car-lover taking on a whole futuristic society.

A student of Atwood would presumably find the first category of innocence-entangled films more Canadian than the second, which assumes a certain devil-may-care confidence on the part of the hero. The student would be left scratching his head at **Dirty Tricks** and **Nothing Personal**. In both of them, the heroes are college profes-

David Clarke has been a free-lance journalist for the CBC, *The Montreal Star*, and *Blow-up*. Currently, he is a screenwriter working in Montreal and Toronto.



Klondike Fever



Pinball Summer

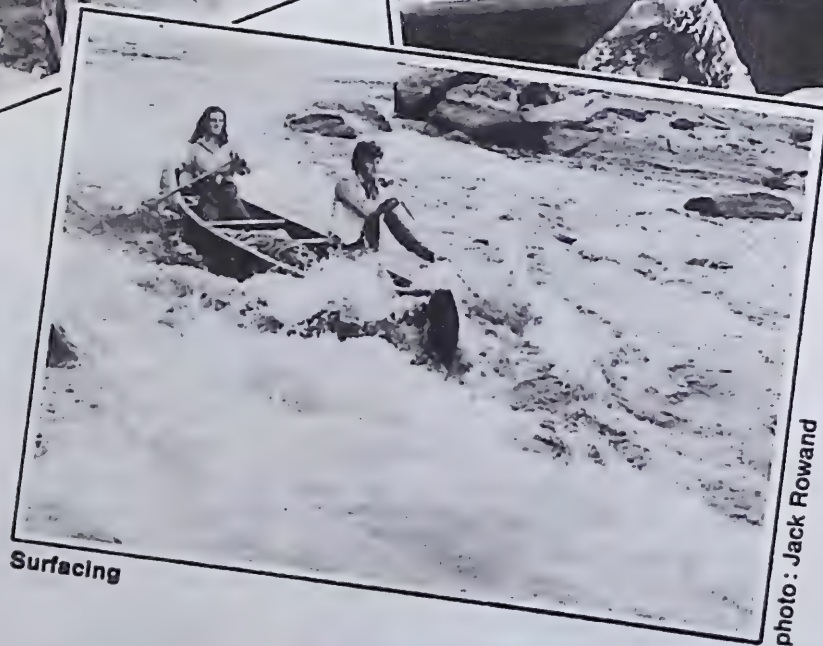
photo: Piroška Mihalka



Head On



Meatballs



Surfacing

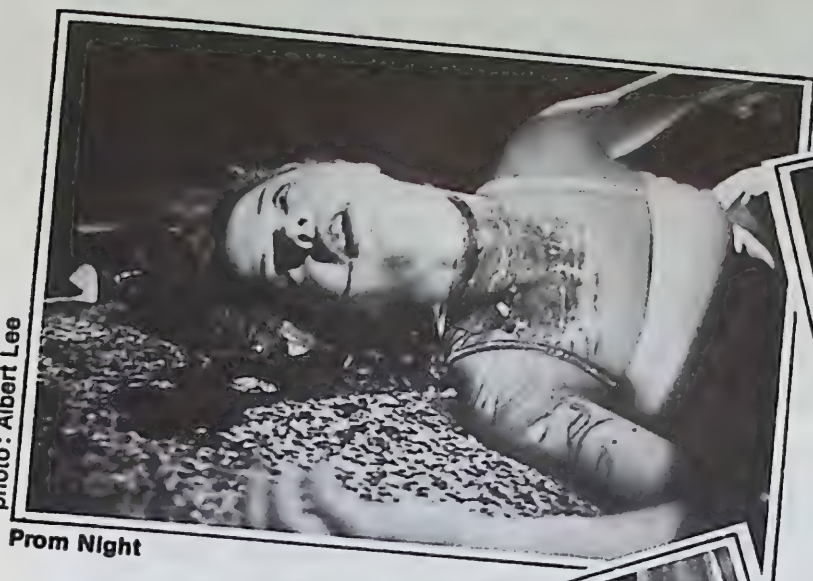
photo: Jack Rowand

sors who drift into intrigue just like Canadians would do; however, the intrigue isn't portrayed as frightening, but funny. And certainly, there is not supposed to be anything funny about being Canadian. Laughing at adversity requires far too much confidence about survival than any freezing prairie homesteader could possibly have mustered up

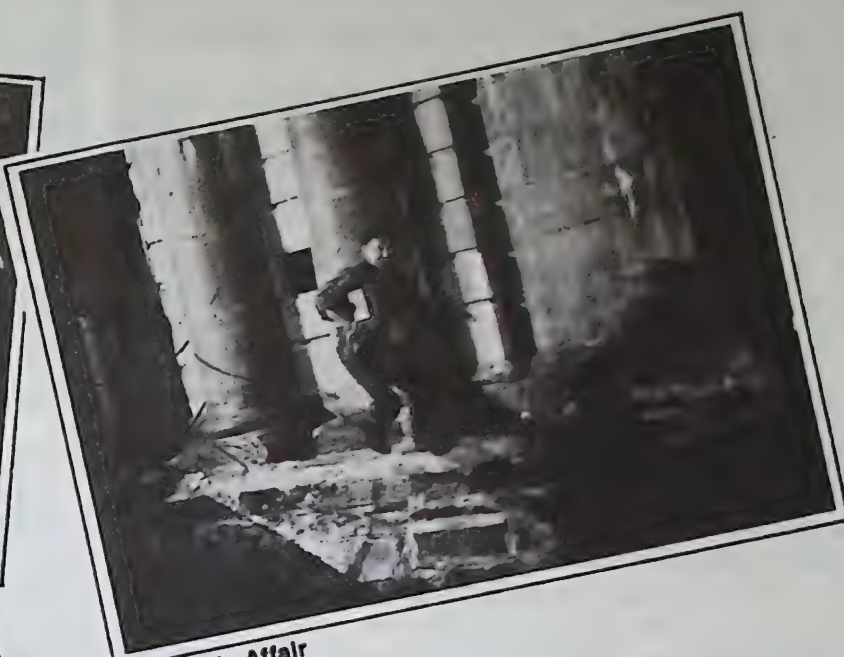
when counting up his stocks of food and fuel and dividing by the number of months until spring.

Ultimately one can only conclude that puritan inflexibility about what is, and what isn't *Canadian* inflicts upon the student all the pains of dogmatism — until he is left splitting cultural hairs and counting the number of Cana-

photo: Albert Lee



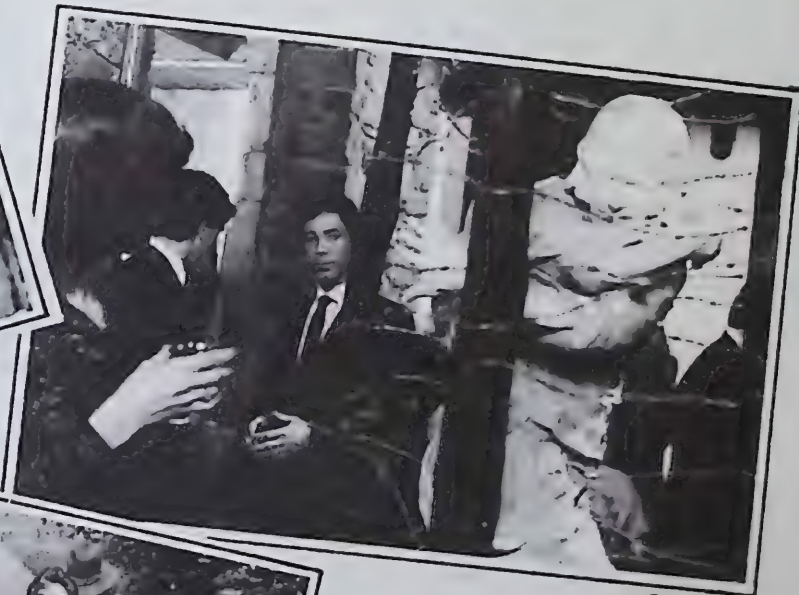
Prom Night



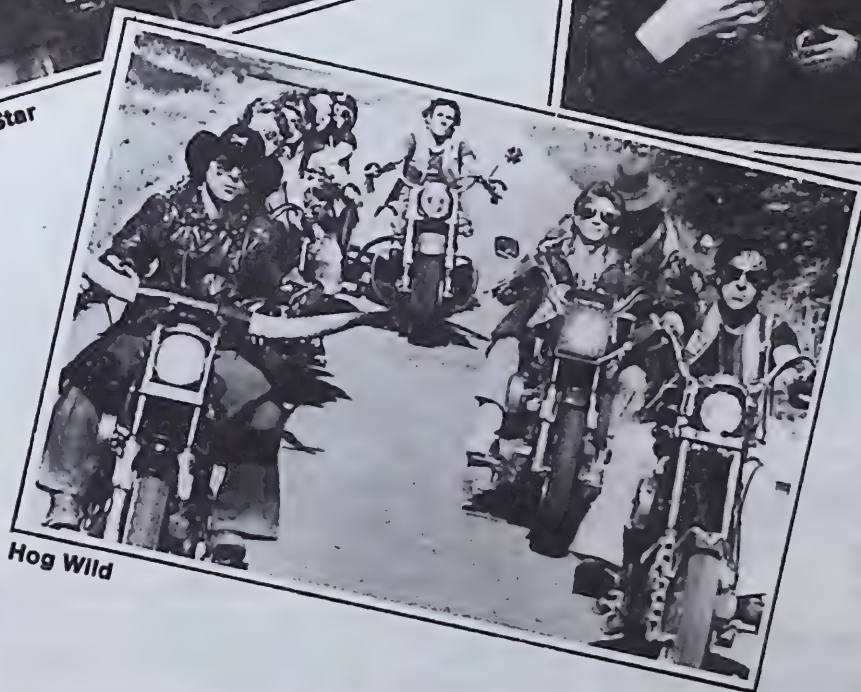
The Coffin Affair



The Lucky Star



Scanners



Hog Wild

dian angels on the end of a nail. The danger is that Atwood's theory could too readily become a security blanket for those still in search of the Canadian Identity. (Atwood would probably be the first to object if her survival theme was to become next year's recommended film formula.)

A number of last year's Quebec films are set along the graceful, allegorical lines of fairy tales. The long caravan that brings the *Fantastica* troupe into Shawin could have been travelling along the Yellow Brick Road. *Le trésor de Nouvelle-France* could have attracted the attentions of Long John Silver. Nothing less than a friendly witch crops

up in *Chateau de cartes*; and an albino, a sandwichman and the Moonshine Bowling League figure largely in *Au clair de la lune*.

It is characteristic of the powerless, the oppressed, and the merely timid, to speak in the veiled terms of allegory or fantasy. East Europeans resort to these methods, as do children. Perhaps these films symbolize something of the way Quebec feels...

It is, however, a film made in English Canada (written and produced by a Québécois), *Tanya's Island*, that takes the prize for fantasy-allegories. Tanya's lover, an artist who paints women who resemble her, in scenes with apes, one day says good-bye. As a result, Tanya drifts off to a fantasy island where she, an ape, and her lover act out an eternal triangle — a primitive, if less sophisticated thematic scenario reminiscent of Marian Engel's novel *Bear* (although it seems unlikely that such a tigress as D.D. Winters needs to escape from her problems into fantasy!).

For the most part the young men in recent Canadian films seem content playing away their lives in *Crunch*, *Pinball Summer* and *Hog Wild*. When they do take on something serious, it tends to be in the past, and / or in some faraway place; obvious examples include *Klondike Fever*, *South Pacific 1942* and *Bear Island*. *The Lucky Star* is a notable exception, because mixed with the young hero's fantasy is a conscious embrace of reality on the part of the filmmakers. Even so, it relies on the American cowboy myth for support. Those who may, in fact, wish to treat Canadian males in a modern context, struggling with a psychological / social reality in, say, Toronto, may hesi-

tate to do so for fear of not being taken seriously (a.k.a. Atwood's theory of the limitations of the Canadian imagination and sense of identity.)

So, it seems to have been left to the women in Canadian films to realistically confront the contemporary situations they face: the encounter with reality usually ends in, at best, a draw. In *In Les bons débarras* the young woman endeavors to shelter her poverty-stricken family with love: in *L'arrache coeur* she attempts to understand the great issues of cancer and motherhood. In the English films her efforts consist mostly of running — into the arms of a drunken old vaudevillian in *Babe*; into the sleeping bag of a nice-guy convict in *The First Hello*; to seedy waterfronts and casinos in *Atlantic City, U.S.A.*; and into the embrace of Richard Burton in *Circle of Two*.

The focus of these films seems to substantiate Henry Miller's theory that twentieth-century storytelling, at its most serious, is by women and about women, given the exhaustion of the themes that have preoccupied men until now. If nothing else, it should embarrass men to see themselves frozen into the defensive posture of survival long after the country has been settled, or merely bouncing around like so many pinballs in frothy *Meatballs* remakes. After all, the Australian cinema — which started from much the same position as the Canadian — seems to be outdoing us at the moment, by portraying the country and its people with dignity in pictures like *My Brilliant Career*, *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and *Breaker Morant*.

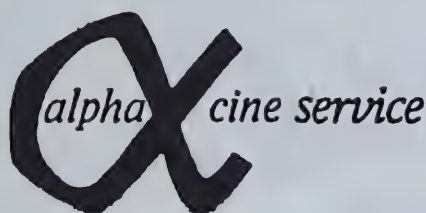
Obviously, the Canadian feature film output ranges in thematic content as a drunken sailor wanders: all over the place! We have made everything from *Mondo Strip*, *Prom Night* and *Scanners* — all worthy attempts to make a buck — to serious and ambitious films like *Head On* and *The Lucky Star*. The films have engaged the survival theme and ignored it, reflected our daily life faithfully, and tried to pass off Montreal as Boston, and 1980 as 1890.

Is this not the very image of what a new-born film industry should be — all confusion and promise and awkwardness? But instead of being proud parents, there are some who would choose to disown the offspring: because, of all things, its features don't look *Canadian* enough.

A great national cinema is great because it addresses *universal* themes. A film like *The Tin Drum*, or *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, might achieve greatness by speaking directly of national experience, but if German cinema spoke of nothing else it would be half the national cinema that it is. It is a batch of films like *An American Friend* or *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* that catch the attention of other nations, by speaking of matters not necessarily close to the national soil, but close to the heart.

The carnival of free-wheeling deal-making that existed last year may still produce great pictures if left more or less alone. But this is not to say that there is no room for improvement.

Critical evaluation of what is being produced must not be ignored; but it must be tempered with a little patience, imagination and flexibility. If not, Atwood's diagnosis / prognosis will realize its final, ironic victory — Canadian filmmakers finding themselves back at square one, putting all of their energies into basic survival. ■



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shelter in a changing climate

by richard m. wise c.a.



In 1977, producers were already worried about the climate. Above, in a press conference at the Festival of Festivals, labour problems and the hiring of non-Canadians were discussed by (from left to right) J.R. Learn of Nesbitt-Thomson, Richard Wise, C.A., Claude Chabrol, Denis Héroux, Julian Melzack, Peter Collinson and lawyer Charles Smiley.

Investment forecasting in the feature film industry is no easy task — especially when it's blowing hot and cold. Recent conditions have prompted investors and brokers alike to suddenly patch up their shelters.

With the start of the fall production season, the time is ripe to outline the current attitude of Canadian taxpayer/investors and their professional advisors toward investment in Canadian certified film productions acquired as a "tax shelter". The Canadian Securities Commissions have just issued a National Policy Statement outlining a number of requirements and restrictions concerning public financing of certified film productions, and the federal taxation authorities are actively reviewing the existing structure of the 100% capital cost allowance (CCA) deduction available to investors in feature and short productions. Moreover, after Labour Day, major efforts will commence on the part of investment dealers to market units in certified feature and short productions to investors across the country.

Before the federal government enacted regulations in December, 1978 — effective for 1979 and subsequent years — concerning the tax deductibility of investment by Canadian taxpayers in certified films, various structures of vehicles existed which attempted to afford a taxpayer an income tax deduction which often exceeded the true cost of the investment, i.e., the amount the investor had at risk. As a result, the most significant changes to the tax legislation now require the restriction of, or limitation on, an investor's CCA tax deduction where (a) there are certain types of revenue guarantees, (b) principal photography is not completed by March 1 of the year following investment, or (c) where the method of payment for the film investment is other than that described below.

The December 1978 amendments even provided restrictions as to how an investment could be made by a taxpayer if his purchase of film units was not paid for entirely in cash, but rather by promissory note.

As a result of these important income tax amendments, practically all film investment currently being offered to the public are on a relatively uniform and consistent income tax basis. For example, most investments being offered involve the downpayment of 20% cash and the issuance by the taxpayer/investor of a personal promissory note equal to the balance (80%) of the purchase price — such note being of a "full-recourse" nature and payable in four years (or earlier out of any revenues from the exploitation of the film). The cash portion is 20% because this is the minimum requirement under the Income Tax Regulations; and the four-year limitation is also a rule. (Note that the various restrictions, etc. relating to revenue guarantees, principal photography completion dates, the mode of payment for film units and the four-year rule relate only to "certified" films, i.e., films in which the government is supposedly trying to encourage investment. A non-"Canadian" — non-certified — film does not have these restrictive "rules," but the CCA rate is only 30% with certain limitations.)

Investors are therefore at risk with respect to the cost of their units in a film, in that the aggregate of the cash plus the promissory note (which is unconditionally payable and for which the investor is personally liable) represents the true "hard" cost of his units. That is, an investor who acquires, for example, a \$10,000 film unit is actually at risk for the full amount. In fact, the amount to which he is exposed could be even larger because his promissory note bears interest which, over a four-year period at current rates, could amount to a fair sum, even after tax. For this reason, and because of the historical track record of motion picture films on a worldwide industry basis, it is not likely that a taxpayer would invest in a film as opposed to stocks, bonds, real estate, art, postage stamps, rare coins, etc. However, it is specifically because of the generous tax incentives given to Canadian investors that many of them have been prepared to take the risk. An investor who, for example, pays tax at the rate of 60% on his top earnings would really have an economic exposure or "downside" of only forty cents on the dollar (ignoring interest).

Strictly because of the tax incentive, Canadians have not been too reluctant to invest their hard-earned funds in motion pictures. However, to their dismay, they are only beginning to realize that "you don't spend a dollar to save sixty cents!" Now, more than ever before, investors are looking at the investment and business aspects of the particular film offering, and not just blindly at the reduction of taxes. As the date approaches for repayment of their promissory note — for which they are fully liable — they will begin to realize that if there are no (further) revenues from their film investment, they will be required

Richard M. Wise, C.A., Montreal, is consultant to a number of members of the Canadian film industry. He has been an advisor to the CFDC, and has lectured extensively and written numerous articles on the business and taxation aspect of investing in certified films.

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to dig into their pockets to repay their note. They are also seeing that even if there are revenues which can be applied toward reducing the balance of the note, these revenues are taxable (at their top marginal rate), which of course means that they must still dig into their pockets.

For example, assume that an investor in the 60% marginal tax bracket acquires an interest in 1980 in a certified feature production for \$10,000, payable as follows: \$2,000 cash downpayment and \$8,000 by way of a four-year personal promissory note bearing interest at prime plus 1%. Assume further that to the extent that there are revenues available to the investor from the exploitation of the film, such revenues will (must) be used to reduce the outstanding balance of the above-mentioned promissory note.

In the year of investment, 1980, the tax deferral (or saving, to the extent the film is unsuccessful) will be \$6,000 (60% of \$10,000). To achieve this benefit the investor had to initially part with the downpayment of \$2,000. Therefore, the "cash flow" or net cash benefit is \$4,000 (\$6,000 - \$2,000). This is what stands out in the investor's mind — unfortunately to the exclusion of everything else: an immediate 200% cash return. He fails to appreciate at that point that he is in debt for \$8,000 plus interest and that, at a 60% marginal tax rate, must receive \$10,000 in film revenues to repay the \$8,000 note. That is, if \$8,000 are owing by the investor, the \$4,000 cash flow from the original tax deferment can serve to reduce the note to \$4,000; the balance payable of \$4,000 (\$8,000 - \$4,000) will require \$10,000 of film revenues, so that after tax (at 60%) there will remain sufficient funds to pay off the balance of \$4,000. If we ignore interest, only if the investor receives \$10,000 will he be able to repay his promissory note — hence today's apparent reluctance on the part of many investors to purchase film units, unless there is some evidence of anticipation of reasonable revenues.

Those who have purchased film units over the last few years are now starting to ask many more questions, because only a handful of investors have recovered the cost of their investment either on a before, or after-tax basis. This reality is being reflected in the current investment climate. Not only do a number of investors want answers, but the investment dealers — who have an image to safeguard — are attempting to seek further protection for their clients by insisting upon distribution contracts, pre-sales, etc. being in place before agreeing to act as broker. Many 1980 film deals already have good distribution arrangements.

What many investment dealers are now seeing is that, when approaching a potential customer for film units, investors are asking why they should continue to invest if, having bought units for the past two, three or four years, they have not even recouped previous years' investments, and still owe money to the producer on their notes. In effect, they are starting to recognize that in a number of cases they did indeed spend \$1.00 to save 60 cents!

Competition is intense among investment dealers and promoters with respect to the marketing of film units during the "tax shelter" selling season (autumn); it is also intense respecting interim or bridge financing earlier in the



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year. But competition does not run simply among films; it is also present vis-à-vis other tax shelter products being offered to the investors, such as oil and gas drilling funds. It must be remembered that *if it were not for the tax shelter aspect of the film investment, investors simply would not purchase units in films.*

It was thought that for 1980, the government's reduction of the tremendous incentive for investing in drilling funds would contribute significantly in helping the film industry attract tax shelter dollars. But, unfortunately, the poor track record of films generally, as investments, has so far greatly inhibited investment this year, with many productions being aborted by producers and/or promoters because of the lack of financing. Ironically, the larger, well-established production houses — which have less of a requirement for outside money — will continue to obtain financing, to produce high-level films of international caliber and to strike the most favourable distribution deals. The smaller, independent producer may be the one to suffer if public investor confidence is not restored.

Sophisticated and prudent investors and their advisors are now asking many questions the answers to which were never really followed up heretofore; so are many conservative and knowledgeable investment dealers (and certain lending institutions). For example, they want to know why producers' fees and other benefits and emoluments are often so high in a number of cases. They now question the so-called "development profit" (built into the budget) which enures to the benefit of the producer, executive producer and sometimes the Canadian Film Development Corporation (CFDC). They look at expenses that are not reflected on the screen, i.e., the so-called "soft costs," that do not enhance the quality of the picture and the consequential revenues that would result from having a better quality picture. Such "soft costs" would include, among other things, interest on interim financing (sometimes as high as 30% per annum); finders' fees (sometimes as high as 15%); issue expenses (often \$150,000); legal fees for the prospectus (often around \$75,000); overhead expenses (often bearing no relationship to the particular film); certain publicity expenses; broker's commission (which ranges from 7% to 9%); etc.; as well as "non-productive" producers' fees; associate producers' fees, and executive producers' fees, to the extent these more than provide compensation/remuneration for services rendered.

Reacting to investor concerns, the Securities Commissions have proposed a general rule that "the promoter will not be permitted to mark up expenses incurred for development of the film rights and screenplay. The total producer fees to be paid to all those with producer titles and those providing producer-like services, except the line producer, shall not exceed 5% of the direct costs, above and below-the-line. The maximum aggregate amount of fees from all sources paid to these persons shall not exceed 10% of direct costs. Any fixed, deferred fees payable to any such person will be included in their fee for the purpose of making the calculation."

Another problem that seems to bother certain investors is that "interim financiers" who have the right to convert their loans (made early in the year) into film ownership

units (at the end of the year) and who have been induced by the high rates of interest (ranging from 1 1/2% to 2 1/2% per month) are suddenly realizing that they are the ones bearing the interest because once they convert, they are in effect purchasing units *the cost of which includes those high interest charges!*

Investors now appear to also be questioning the non-arm's-length relationships existing in a number of film deals insofar as commissions, interest, fees for services, trustee fees, etc. are concerned.

Some investors, as well as certain investment dealers, are seriously questioning why, in the case of, say, a multi-film package, various economies of scale are not available so that the resultant savings could be passed on to the investors. For example, where there is a multi-film package, one would assume that as a result of quantity purchasing of supplies and services, where the producer is a "price-setting buyer," an attractive deal could be struck with the various suppliers.

Investors have now begun to understand the royalty/revenue flow with respect to films. They are beginning to, at least in theory, trace the revenue flow from the various media such as theatres, pay-TV, network TV, syndication, video cassettes, in-flight movies, TV serialization, etc. to the distributor and to the producer. Accordingly, investors are calculating in their minds that the box office figures must be very high simply in order to break even, but they are willing to accept that as peculiar to the industry. However, they appear more and more reluctant to accept a high proportion of "soft costs" (above), since it would require that much more film revenue for an investor to get his money back.

In this connection, Securities Commissions now require that producers/promoters must "assist investors in understanding the film industry," and have published guidelines in their National Policy Statement intended to "contribute to prospectuses." Furthermore the Commissions require that the prospectus must highlight the risk factors and speculative nature of the film investment. While this is not new, their Policy Statement is quite specific.

Certain investors have expressed skepticism vis-à-vis expenses being charged to distribution revenues or, indeed, to current film production. For example, certain producers — in order to keep a high visibility with prospective investors in the event of future financial needs — are providing investors with various gimmicks (such as three-ring binders in which investors can file the various despatches coming from the producer). Notwithstanding how relatively inexpensive such gifts are, disgruntled investors are asking "who is really paying for these perks?"

In early 1979, the Motion Picture Institute of Canada held a major conference on film financing in Toronto. There were many speakers from both Canada and the U.S. who addressed the audience on the subject of financing Canadian films. One of the panelists was a senior official of the Ontario Securities Commission. During the public question period following his address to the audience, it was recommended to him by the author of this article that the Commission issue certain guidelines for

purposes of protecting the investors. (This, in turn, would have the effect of minimizing investor losses and thus keeping the level of investor confidence and production of Canadian films high.) The OSC official respectfully dismissed the suggestion as one that would be burdensome and fraught with difficulties and, on the whole, neither convenient nor within the particular scope of the Commission. It is interesting to note that the Ontario Commission is one of the key participants in the development and spearheading of the National Policy Statement on public financing of certified feature and short productions.

While the involvement and interest of the Securities Commissions may have unfortunately appeared a few years late, it is hoped that this will have some effect on regaining investor confidence in the business and financial aspects of investing in Canadian certified films.

It would be unfair to completely exonerate the investors themselves, as well as their advisors. The problem is that investors rarely read the contents of a prospectus or offering circular. The more disclosure — the thicker, heavier and more burdensome the document is — ironically, the less chance there is of an investor reading (let alone understanding) its contents. A current example of the extent to which investors do not read prospectuses or other offering circulars relates to a number of "interim financing" opportunities recently being marketed to investors. Even though the term "second position" is used throughout in connection with such an offering, the investor does not really appreciate the realities of his legal/economic position as lender. He fails to understand that, while his money is "as good" as anyone else's, he stands behind the other lenders. He is "blinded" by an extremely attractive interest rate and perhaps a small "commitment" fee; yet he has taken a back seat with respect to both (a) repayment and (b) security in the event that he does not get repaid. The solution is to coordinate the loans among the various lenders on a negotiated basis. Otherwise such "deals" hurt the Canadian film industry and, as we can see, the effects are just now surfacing. To use the words of the Canadian Securities Administrators, this is a "highly complex industry." And so it is... particularly with respect to financing.

Finally, it may be of interest to briefly outline some of the more relevant items or headings covered by the Securities Commissions' National Policy Statement:

- Accountability of Promoters to Investors
- Structuring of the Offering
- Production (including the identification of interim financiers; the amounts involved and the cost of such financing; profit and mark-ups payable to the promoter, producer or to related parties; etc.)
- Completion Guarantee (For the first time there will be a requirement that any rebate of a portion of the fee must be returned to the investors.)
- Distribution (The face page of the prospectus must disclose, if applicable, the fact that distribution agreements are not in place for major markets — in particular the U.S.)
- Risk Factors (Prospectus should clearly indicate that to achieve recoupment from theatrical exhibition alone, a film must generate box office receipts many times its budget within a few years.)

— Management Interests and Conflicts of Interest.

It is quite obvious that investor experience in films over the last few years has compelled the provincial Securities Commission to act. Hopefully, with such "controls" and investors safeguards, the industry will continue to attract tax shelter dollars. The points and issues raised here are real, timely and express widespread views. Those Canadian chartered banks who have, until now, been providing production financing have suddenly begun to express concern because repayment of their production loan will come about only if investors continue to purchase units in certified film productions. If there is a significant decline in investment, the funds that would otherwise be available to repay the bank loan will not be forthcoming — which would mean that the bank will become an (unwilling) investor.

As 1980 appears to be a difficult year in which to finance productions, it is up to the leaders in the Canadian industry and the producers of many years' standing in which direction the industry will head.

Finally, if the CCA rate applicable to certified films (100%) is reduced by the taxation authorities, there will be an even greater need to upgrade the business aspects of the taxpayer's film investment. ■

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BOOKSHELF

by george l. george

In **Motion Picture Camera Data**, extensive descriptions of some 90 cameras in general use with detailed instructions on their operation, maintenance and repair are offered by David W. Samuelson. This useful manual is enhanced by many excellent line drawings (Focal Press \$8.95).

The film music editor's craft is discussed in practical terms by Milton Lustig in **Music Editing for Motion Pictures**. The book explores thoroughly the complex and precise work of the editor, and the equipment required. It is a documented text that composers and arrangers will find equally valuable (Hastings House \$15.95).

An illustrated history of the silent film, Kevin Brownlow's **Hollywood: The Pioneers** is an uncommonly informative and engaging picture of a significant period. A compilation of interviews, it offers a broad assortment of vivid recollections by survivors from all ranks of the industry, backed by a remarkable collection of rare stills (Knopf \$20).

A hilarious, on-target book by Harry and David Medved, **The Golden Turkey Awards** singles out the "worst achievements" in Hollywood history, drawing a bead on such epics as *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes* as The Worst Vegetable Movie of All Time, and bestowing The Most Ludicrous Racial Impersonation Award on Elvis Presley for his role as an Indian in *Stay Away, Joe* (Putnam \$6.95).

Three collections of reviews by a trio of top film critics afford enlightening insight into the variations of the craft. In **When the Lights Go Down**, Pauline Kael, critic for New Yorker magazine, displays her sharp analytical powers and her extensive familiarity with cinema art and history (Holt, Rinehart, Winston \$18.95/9.95); in **Before My Eyes**, reviews and comments by Stanley Kauffman in *The New Republic* attest to his sensitivity and his appreciation of the collaborative nature of filmmaking (Harper & Row \$16.95); in **The Pleasure Dome**, novelist Graham Greene's sophisticated approach, as dis-

played in British periodicals of the 30s, is a delightful change of pace (Oxford U. press \$9.95).

In a scholarly study by Stephen Neale, **Genre**, ideological approaches to the evaluation of film are explored in a knowledgeable and stimulating manner. Cogently criticizing structuralist/semiotic and other currently popular disciplines, Neale advocates a switch in perspective to a methodical analysis of cinema as a social institution (N.Y. Zoetrope \$6.25).

Names on the Screen

Are artists in general, and movie stars specifically, beset by self-destructive urges that sometimes lead to suicide? Katinka Matson, in her controversial volume **Short Lives**, cites the cases of Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, Judy Garland and Montgomery Clift as proofs of her assertion. She fails, however, to present solid psychological motivation for the factual evidence she submits (Morrow \$16.95/9.95).

Was Errol Flynn a Nazi spy? Charles Higham, in **Errol Flynn: The Untold Story**, unveils declassified CIA and FBI documents to support this allegation. True or false, his book spins a fascinating tale, a classical mixture of sex, intrigue and glamour (Doubleday \$12.95). In **Cagney: The Actor As Auteur**, Patrick McGilligan assesses the versatile performer's innate ability to rise above the often hackneyed roles he was called upon to enact and offer true in-depth characterizations (Da Capo \$6.95).

Fassbinder, a perceptive collection of essays edited by Tony Rayns analyzes the noted German director whose recent *The Marriage of Maria Braun* managed once again to infuriate both establishment and anti-establishment groups in his native land. These papers examine the factors behind Rainer Werner Fassbinder's sharp attacks on bourgeois society and assess their place in Europe's progressive film culture (N.Y. Zoetrope \$8.25).

A celebrated Hollywood producer of successful, low-budget films of a generally sensational and gory nature is saluted in **The Movie World of Roger Corman**, an entertaining and informative factbook

edited by J. Philip di Franco. It gives Corman due credit for his unorthodox methods of film production and his willingness to use young and unknown directors (Chelsea \$17.95).

Recent French Books

A valuable compilation of French film books has been issued by the Comité de Liaison de l'Édition Cinématographique with the assistance of publisher Pierre Lherminier. Listed in *Le cinéma en 100,000 pages* are more than 800 books published prior to 1980 and still in stock, with a separate list of those announced for or published during this year. All French-language books are included, whether published in France or abroad. Film buffs and scholars, libraries and bookstores will find this brochure a thoroughgoing reference source (Cinéma d'aujourd'hui F5).

In **Comédiennes aujourd'hui**, Jean-Luc Douin offers in-depth interviews with 6 leading young actresses: Isabelle Adjani, Dominique Laffin, Isabelle Huppert, Miou Miou, Christine Pascal and Maria Schneider. Articulate in their assessment of their craft and professional in their exercise of it, they represent new directions in French cinema toward a realism without hangups (Lherminier F110).

An early star in French movies is sensitively profiled in **Musidora, la dixième muse** by Patrick Cazals. Seductive in a clinging black silk leotard that covered her revealingly from head to toe, Musidora dominated French cinema in World War I. days by her sensational appearances in Louis Feuillade's celebrated serials *Judex* and *Les Vampires*. Musidora went on to directing films, writing books, lecturing, singing in music halls, and forcefully championing militant feminism (Veyrier F60).

Film techniques taught at the Vincennes department of the Université de Paris are summarized in a collectively written volume, **Du cinéma selon Vincennes**. Contributors include members of the teaching staff who explore the various experimental approaches and theoretical innovations that link film techniques with the social and esthetic realities of contemporary life (Lherminier F55). ■

Academy Award winning George L. George is a film director who does film book reviews in Canada, France and the U.S.

EQUIPMENT NEWS

Aaton 8-35

Following the successful introduction of his 16mm movie camera, the Aaton 7 LTR, Jean-Pierre Beauviala has now moved to the development of a compact 35mm camera. The Aaton 8-35 combines the ease of handling and unobtrusiveness of the LTR with the quantity of information contained in a 35mm image.

The 8-35 is handheld, with instant-change magazines in both 60 and 150m sizes. Small and light, it weighs in at about 5kg with the 60m mag., less than the LTR.

The image steadiness is excellent, utilizing the same patented claw movement that has made a name for the LTR. On double-exposure tests, no visible sign of any movement can be observed. Noise level is about 29dB with blimp and 33dB without. Standard features include a 24/25 fps crystal motor with variable 2 to 32, automatic upright image viewfinder, and clip-on 60m displacement or 150m co-axial mags. Also available will be video take-off, exposuremeter system, and Aaton clear numeral time-marking.

The prototype has been in use since April 1979, and Jean-Luc Goddard has recently finished his latest feature, "Sauve qui peut (La vie)," shot with an Arri 35BL and the Aaton 8-35.

Price is expected to be approximately \$35,000 complete with two 150m mags, two batteries, battery charger, less lens. Kingsway Film of Toronto, the Canadian distributor, expects delivery of the first 8-35 in mid 1981.

"Scotch" Brand "VHS" T-30 Cassette

A "Scotch" Brand "VHS" T-30 video-cassette has been added to the line of "VHS"-format products offered by 3M Canada Inc., Magnetic Audio/Video Products.

The T-30 offers an option to those who need 30-60 minutes of recording and/or playing time. It's especially useful for owners of home video tape cameras who tape such occasions as birthday parties, children's recitals and important family gatherings.

For more information, write Recording Materials Division, 3M Canada Inc., P.O. Box 5757, London, Ontario N6A 4T1.

"Scotchlite" Retro-reflective Fabric



From across the universe through the portholes of time comes an alien — a gorgeous visitor at that — bearing an important message for the people of Earth from Rowntree Mackintosh Canada Ltd.

The television commercial "Odyssey," first aired in September 1979, uses a "Barbarella" space-like concept to introduce their new candy bar "Krunchwich." With this concept, the originators, T.D.F. Film Productions Ltd., and Ogilvie & Mather advertising agency, faced an interesting challenge: the alien costumes had to be unique.

To project the space-like, futuristic theme of the advertisement, T.D.F. decided they needed to have an eerie glow emanating from the costumes. Their special-effects expert, cinematographer Nick Allen-Wolfe, contacted 3M Canada Inc., to discuss how their "Scotchlite" retro-reflective materials might be used to create the special effect. The company's Advertising Services and Protective Products Division markets "Scotchlite" products for safety and graphic advertising purposes.

Following discussions with Frank Lyons, 3M Safety Systems administrator for Ontario, samples of "Scotchlite" fabric were tested by T.D.F. The costumes were then fabricated using a silver "Scotchlite" material.

To achieve the desired flashback effect during filming, Wolfe constructed a special parabolic reflector containing

twenty, 25-watt bulbs, and set the camera lens inside the reflector.

Unlike other materials that ordinarily diffuse light or reflect light away from its source, the "Scotchlite" fabric bounces light almost directly back to its source. With both the camera lens and the lights inside the reflector, the garments appear to glow without distorting or otherwise affecting the other visual aspects of the commercial.

For more information about "Scotchlite" reflective fabrics, write Advertising Services and Protective Products Division, 3M Canada Inc., P.O. Box 5757, London, Ontario N6A 4T1.

Plug-in Phaser Card For the FL201 Instant Flanger

Eventide has introduced a plug-in card for the Instant Flanger, which turns the unit into an Instant Phaser, with even higher quality than the classic Eventide PS101.



The BPC101 Phaser Card is interchangeable with the SDC-1 Flanger Card. It uses electronic phase-shift networks to generate frequency cancellations in the audio signal, rather than the bucket brigade devices used in the Instant Flanger.

The Phaser Card requires simple calibration to work with the individual flanger, and thereafter the phaser and flanger cards may be interchanged with no further adjustments.

The cost of the BPC101 Phaser Card is \$233. The FL201 Instant Flanger may be purchased with either the SDC-1 Flanger Card or the BPC101 Phaser Card for \$615, or with both for \$848. Other options for the Instant Flanger remain the same. The BPC Phaser Card is available from stock.

FILM REVIEWS

Angels

p./d. Edie Yolles assist. d. John Bradshaw
cam. Bill Reeve, Alex Vizmeg (assist.) ed. Edie
Yolles assoc. ed. John Bradshaw, Chris Lee
(assist.) sd. Steve Withrow, Wade Cornell
(assist.) light. Christopher Wilson, Marvin
Midwicki (assist.), Don Egoroff (assist.) p.a.
Tim Belliveau, Michael Kennedy, Wang Chow,
Chris Lee, Doug Pruss, Joe Vizmeg, Daniel
Chalifour, Geoffrey Lee add. cam. Michael
Kennedy, Tony Currie, Kent Lindsay, Rick
Price elec. Alan Goloboff pre-mix assist. Tom
Brennand, Kirk Hawks, Peter Buhl, Paul Fitz-
Gerald, Mick Griffin, Les Holdway mix George
Novotny, John Bradshaw (assist.) neg. cut.
Catherine Rankin opticals Film Optical's lab.
Medallion Film Laboratories Limited "Sun-

shine Song", written and sung by Michal
Hasek running time 28.5 min. col. 16mm
dist. Canadian Filmmakers' Distribution Centre

Edie Yolles' *Angels* is 26 minutes of
bright images and lots of love. It is also a
finely crafted film. The Red Ribbon it won
at the American Film Festival is well
deserved.

This documentary explores the activities
of the Inner City Angels, a group of 50
Toronto artists based at Scadding House,
that tiny historic house hidden behind the
Eaton Centre. The Angels work with kids.
They go out to the schools and community
centres of Toronto's core areas, or they
invite the kids to come to them at Scadding
House. Each artist presides over a work-
shop in which the young participants

begin to get in touch with their own
creativity while they are learning and
having fun.

The film brings the viewer into the
midst of several of these workshops. It
also goes along on Angel field trips, to the
Toronto Island and to an Argo game. It
illustrates how this group is managing to
spread its energies in all directions — that
there is an angel for everything from
dance therapy to kite-making.

These Angels are special people. The
film is strong because it succeeds in
showing the creative spark in each of
them and how it is transmitted to the kids
they work with. Poet Sean O'Huigin
conducts a session in sound poetry, having
fun doing variations on the word "turnip."



Thanks to the Angels, inner city children learn how to joyfully release their creative energies

The kids are not exactly sure what he's up to, but John Reeves' camera catches them totally absorbed. When O'Huigin sets them to work on their own names they jump right in. And filmmaker Aido Suzuki uses two cut-out photos to plan a script for a film with another group. When one small boy complains that the pictures are not all the same size she challenges him: "Why does everything have to be so symmetrical?"... Good lessons to open the minds of kids of all ages, but especially those growing up in the heart of the city.

Intimacy, fun, concentration and dignity are what the Angels teach. Live sound and the editing of Yolles and John Bradshaw bring these elements together. John Reeves' cinematography creates a bright collage that naturally lifts the spirits. Edie Yolles began the project as a film student at Ryerson. It is to her credit that she could bring together fellow students, professional film people, government officials, public and private money, and of course the Inner City Angels to produce a film that ought to be seen by urban folk everywhere.

John Brooke

The View From Vinegar Hill

p./d. Barbara Boyden cam. Mark Irwin ed. Paul Caulfield music consult. Heather Conkie exec. p. Don Haig p.c. Film Arts running time 12 minutes col. 16mm dist. Canadian Filmmaker's Distribution Centre and Kinetic Film Enterprises

"When we moved here to Vinegar Hill, I thought it was a very magic spot. It's very close to nature and there's a sort of pioneer feeling about it. And I think too many people ignore their history. This felt like my place in the world and so I decided to do a lifetime series... it's my view of life as seen from Vinegar Hill."

- Barbara Elizabeth Mercer, in *The View From Vinegar Hill*

Barbara Boyden's film asks little more of us than that for a few minutes, we share painter Barbara Elizabeth Mercer's view of life, a view that is, as she puts it, "child-like and wonderlike."

That the film seems longer than its 12 minutes is a testimony to the combined

skills of producer/director Barbara Boyden, cameraman Mark Irwin, editor Paul Caulfield, and music consultant Heather Conkie. Ultimately, they draw us into Mercer's world so completely that at the end, we feel we understand both her work and what led her to live at Vinegar Hill, to create there a series of naive paintings that have an undeniable force and charm.

Barbara Elizabeth Mercer is a beautiful, serene woman, with a face and a voice that the film affectionately uses. Her house, its setting, and her obvious love

and appreciation of both, are carefully and succinctly set down for us before we go on to look at her work.

It is through the exploration of her work that the film widens from what might have been only a finely-drawn vignette. The convention of slow panning shots over the paintings does more for the artist's work, and our viewing of it, than most of us could do unaided. Perhaps a trained eye can see a painting the way the camera sees it here; but I, for one, feel more at ease with film than with static forms of art, and therefore Irwin's camera leads me to



The wonder of life as seen through artist, Barbara Mercer's eyes

SHORT FILM REVIEWS

see things in the pictures that I would have missed on my own.

Some people feel uneasy at the coupling of two art forms in this way, with one explaining and illuminating the other. Shouldn't the pictures be able to stand on their own? Isn't the camera intruding by leading our eye over the pictures rather than letting us explore them in our own way? Certainly not. What better use for any art form than to help us understand something better, even another art form.

It would be difficult to come away from the film without feeling that living the way Mercer lives would be good for all of us, and that her work, if unknown to us, should not be. She diffidently points out that Harold Town wanted to trade one of his paintings for one of hers. The film leads us to believe that he got a good deal.

Alan Stewart

Where The Bittersweet Grows

p./d. Kim Ondaatje cam. James B. Kelley, Steve Behal, Derek Redmond graphic design Michael Talley ed. Margaret Van Eerdewyk, Kim Ondaatje neg. cutter May Bischoff p.a. Ben Moran, James Moyer research Killaloe area, Gordon Flagler sd. ed. Margaret Van Eerdewyk re-rec. Len Abbot original mus. Bill Whiteacre dist. Canadian Filmmaker's Distribution Centre running time 26 min. col. 16mm.

Kim Ondaatje's *Where the Bittersweet Grows*, Part I, is a documentary film which deals in a factual way with three families who have chosen to live in the country, in homes they have built themselves. Part I is the first of three intended films that will be made at five-year intervals to report and reflect on the families as they develop, age, and settle further into their chosen environments. All three families are attractive, well-educated, and have children. Their choice to live where and how they do seems to be the result of a calm decision, rather than an hysterical flight from the city. All of them appear to be enviably fulfilled and content.

The appeal of these modern settlers is undeniable, but it is the houses and the rural environment that give the film its magic. This does not detract from the homebuilders themselves; after all, it is their dreams, imagination, and hard work which the houses represent. However, we have all seen films that use the building theme — everything from the rain-forest villages in those *Burma, Land of Contrast* things that people show in high school gyms, to *The Shining* — but in few cases are we drawn in to the extent that we are in *Where The Bittersweet Grows*.

If Ondaatje intended in Part I to introduce the families, give us a capsule history of each one, and show us their respective houses in the woods, she has certainly succeeded. The quiet interviews and voice-overs give us most of the factual information necessary to understand the

different backgrounds and motivations. If the film had been in Swahili or Hindi, it would still have had the same charming effect, for it is the photography that lures us into the film's soft, bucolic world.

Ondaatje has achieved more than just a tasteful representation of the man-made, and the natural habitat. Without sacrificing the repertorial aspects of the film, she has artistically interpreted and presented the land, houses and furniture as a kind of visual tone poem.

This simple, spare poetry is capable of creating a multilayered image around one small object, like a blue bottle on a wooden window-ledge or a horse walking through long grass.

The tranquil feelings of the three families are aptly communicated and reinforced by the visuals. Indeed, the combined efforts of Ondaatje, cameraman Jim Kelly, and Margaret Van Eerdewyk, who did the editing with Ondaatje, have resulted in a film that I could willingly see again and again. It satisfies on all levels.

Alan Stewart



A world to explore *Where The Bittersweet Grows*

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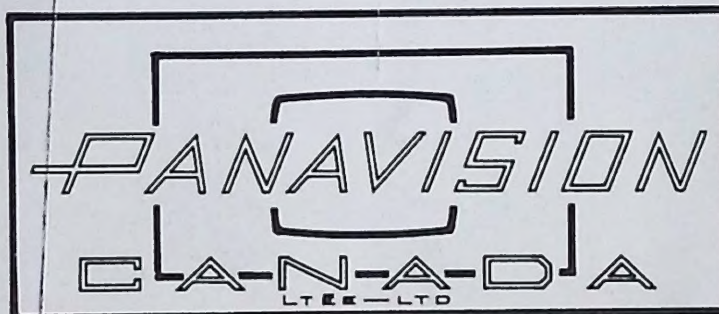
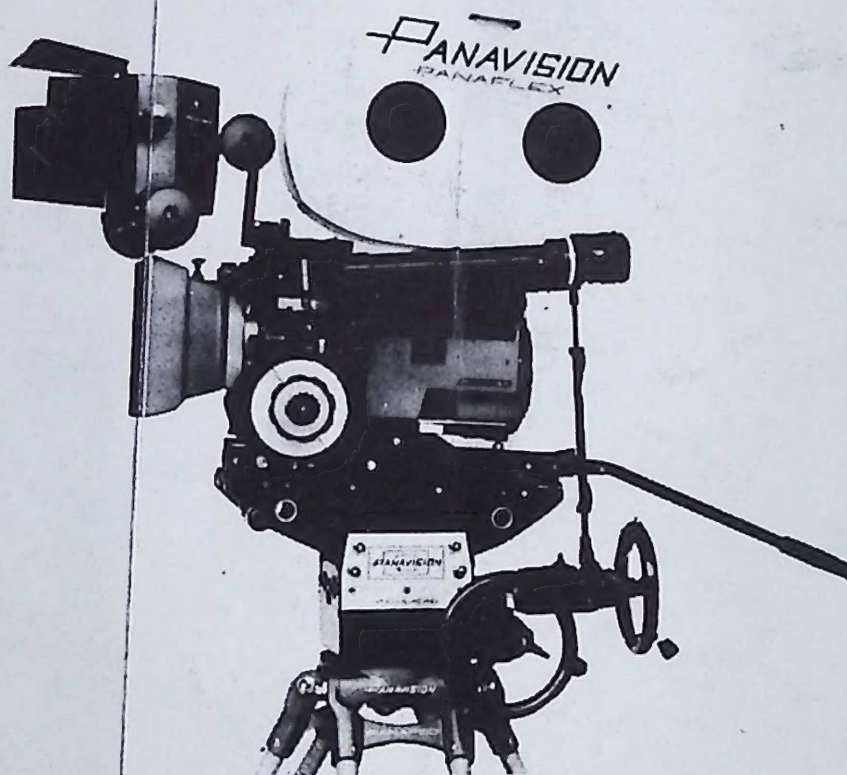
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